



# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*Pinot Noir: Life begins at <2 tons/acre*

## Kutch Wines: 2013 Vintage Provided Compelling & Transparent Wines

It was nearly ten years ago when I first profiled winemaker Jamie Kutch in the *PinotFile* ("Following Your Pinot Dream," [www.princeofpinot.com/article/1274/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/1274/)). I like to think I had a little role in his decision to leave a successful Wall Street career to pursue a life's work as a Pinot Noir vintner. Jamie admitted that he had read every issue of the *PinotFile* leading up to his career change. Since 2005, I have followed the evolution of his wines and applauded his success. After years of crafting wine at Deerfield Ranch Winery in Sonoma Valley, he proudly moved into his own winemaking facility in 2012. The new winery gleamed with 30 new tanks including Grenier 4-ton wood tanks from France (the same as used at Domaine Romanée-Conti).



Jamie has become a strong proponent of whole cluster fermentation, a vinification technique that has become more en vogue in California and Oregon in recent years. It is not new, for the Burgundians practiced stem inclusion in the production of Pinot Noir for centuries as historically they had no de-stemmers. The use of whole cluster fermentation fell out of favor stateside when modern de-stemmers arrived over fifteen years ago, but a number of vintners such as Jamie have successfully championed the technique.

Inclusions of whole clusters (intact berries and stems) in fermentation adds an extra dimension to the structure, texture, sensuality, and aromatic and flavor profile of Pinot Noir. There are potential pitfalls to this technique such as potential green aromas and flavors, so appropriate vintage, clone and vineyard site are critical for its success. It is important that grapes are sourced from cooler sites where sugar ripeness and physiological ripeness occur in tandem and coincide with stem lignification. Jamie's vineyard sources in the far west Sonoma Coast satisfy this criteria. When vintage conditions cooperate, such as in 2013, 100% whole cluster fermentation can produce seductive wines.

All the following wines were 100% whole cluster fermented using native yeasts, underwent native malolactic fermentation, and were aged sur lie for 10 months without racking. Punch downs were carried out twice a day by foot. Despite the whole cluster fermentation, which can potentially lead to relatively unapproachable wines upon release, these wines can be enjoyed now, but should evolve beautifully in the cellar. All three vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs are distinctive and terroir driven, a conclusion I reached after tasting, and later was corroborated by Jamie.

Commenting on the 2013 vintage, Jamie said he was pleased with the Pinot Noirs. "They show welcome freshness and purity, somewhat akin to the 2011 vintage. Yields were down compared to 2012, but still bountiful." Jamie felt that the wines expressed their sense of place more than any previous vintage in part due to a higher skill level in the winery and the use of equipment to preserve the fruit character. His 2013 wines also benefited from his increasing familiarity with his vineyards with each vintage that allows more precise decisions unique to each site.

What I admire about Jamie is that he is a thinker and innovator, rather than someone who follows the pack. As Jamie notes, "I will never stop pushing the envelope nor play it safe." The Sans Soufre Pinot Noir is a perfect example.

Here is what Jamie told me about this unique wine. "The thought process behind this wine was to push the boundaries and see if it could be done in California. San Soufre means "without sulfur," and none was ever added to this wine during the winemaking process. The results are what I consider to be the purest expression of Pinot Noir. The grapes had very high natural acidity which was important. I fermented the wine partially carbonic (100% whole cluster grapes were sealed in a tank while fermentation continued without punch downs or pump overs). Once the Brix dropped to 10° (half way through fermentation), I began punching down the grapes by foot. The goal was to capture higher levels of CO2 and use its preservative qualities in lieu of using sulfur. The wine was aged in old, neutral barrels and bottled directly from barrel, never racking it to tank. The wine is not the same wine and not sourced from the same vineyards as the Sonoma Coast bottling. For me it is very special and a wine I could drink every day and die a happy man."

**2013 Kutch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.3% alc., 1,500 cases, \$39. 60% Campbell Ranch, 40% Sonoma Stage and 20% Le Jons vineyards. Aged in 30% new and 70% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Sumptuous aromas of black raspberry, blackberry and sous bois are tenacious over time in the glass. The mid weight flavors of blue and black berries and plum are intense and seductive on the attack, maintaining an earthy presence on the finish which offers a whisper of oak. The dry tannins are well proportioned and the wine's overall balance is commendable. This wine could use a little more time to fully evolve. 89-90.*

**2013 Kutch Wines Sans Soufre Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.1% alc., 45 cases, \$N/A. Restaurant only release. Vinified without sulfur additions. Harvest Brix 19.5° and pH 2.95. 100% whole cluster with some carbonic ferment. Aged 11 months in neutral barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately deep cherry color in the glass. More fragrant than the regular Sonoma Coast bottling with a delightful perfume of raspberry, exotic spices and rose petal. Noticeable lift, vibrancy and freshness with copious pure fruit presence similar to a Gamay based Beaujolais wine. Easy to drink with very modest tannins and electric acidity on the finish. 91.*

**2013 Kutch Bohan Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.3% alc., 150 cases, \$49. Vines planted in 1972 (clone unknown). Own-rooted, dry-farmed, California sprawl trellising, 10' x 8' spacing, cordon pruned. Aged in 30% new and 70% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate black cherry color in the glass. The nose is fresh and very pleasant with aromas of dark cherry pie glaze, spice, wildflowers, and conifer. The rich core of tasty black cherry, black raspberry and pomegranate fruits*

are embellished with a complimentary touch of oak. The tannins are fine-grain and slightly rugged, but add textural interest. The long and powerful, sweet cherry finish is beguiling. **92-93.**



**2012 Kutch Falstaff Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.3% alc., 350 cases, \$59.

Vineyard planted in 2001 in Goldridge soils. Clones are "828," 115 and 777. 580 feet elevation, 8.5 miles inland from the coast. One of the coolest Pinot Noir vineyards in the North Coast with average mean monthly growing season temperature of 60°F. VSP trellising, spur pruned, 8' x 5' spacing. Aged in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is mesmerizing with hi-tone aromas of cherry rock candy, raspberry coulis, spiced plum and rose petal. Sleek and seductive and seamless in every way, this wine offers juicy flavors of Bing cherry, raspberry and strawberry robed in modest, soft tannins. Highly approachable with a refreshing lift of tight, defining acidity. More demure and feminine than the McDougall bottling. Wow! 93-94.*



**2012 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.2% alc., 500 cases, \$59.

Vineyard planted in 1998 in Graywacke and Sandstone soils. Dijon clone 114. VSP trellising, spur pruned, 8' x 5' spacing. 935 feet elevation, 3.4 miles inland from the coast. Aged in 50% new and 50% used French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely scent of black cherry, blackberry jam, wilted rose and underbrush. Delicious mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and boysenberry supported by firm but balanced tannins and the slightest hint of oak. The tremendously flavorful attack of sappy fruit leads to an extraordinarily long and juicy finish. Enjoyable now, this wine will benefit from more tannin integration over time. This is a wine that brings you to your knees, makes you turn your eyes to the heavens, and give thanks. 95-96.*



Kutch wines are in limited production and are only sold through a mailing list at [www.kutchwines.com](http://www.kutchwines.com). Two releases a year, in January and July, are offered through email and can be ordered then online. Consistent buying patterns over time lead to increased amounts of wine offered.

# Alexana: Prescription for Pinot with Unlimited Refills

Dr. Medaiah Revana, proprietor of Alexana Winery, was one of the featured Oregon physicians in the November 2014 article I wrote for *Oregon Wine Press*: “Prescription for Pinot: Doctors Take Up Residency Among Oregon’s Noble Red,” [www.oregonwinepress.com/doctors-prescription-pinot-oregon-wine](http://www.oregonwinepress.com/doctors-prescription-pinot-oregon-wine). The cover of that issue features a photo by Andrea Johnson of Drs. John O. Bergström (left) and Madiaiah Revana.



Dr. Revana grew up in rural India near Bangalore where his family has been farming for generations and this farming heritage led to his instinct for winegrowing. He graduated first in his class from Mysore Medical College in India and became board certified in cardiology and internal medicine after serving his residency and fellowship in the United States.

Dr. Revana was first introduced to wine by friends and became fascinated with Bordeaux’s first growths while practicing cardiology in Houston, Texas. He traveled to the wine regions of Europe and the United States, and became determined to establish a world class vineyard estate. In 1997, on a visit to the Napa Valley, he found a small parcel of prime vineyard land in St. Helena. In 1998, he hired vineyard manager Jim Barbour to plant and maintain a 9-acre vineyard, and started Revana Family Vineyard, releasing the first vintage in 2001. Noted winemaker Heidi Barrett was the initial winemaker and later Thomas Rivers Brown.

As many wine connoisseurs do, Dr. Revana developed a love of great Burgundy wines as well. After enlisting the assistance of noted Oregon winemaker Lynn Penner-Ash of Penner-Ash Wines (I jokingly refer to her as Lynn Pennoir-Ash), he acquired 80 acres of vineyard land in the Dundee Hills appellation in 2005, and started Alexana Winery, named after his daughter, Alexander Revana. An additional 39 acres of Pinot Noir, Riesling and Chardonnay were later added to the existing 16 acres of Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris. Today, the Revana Vineyard, which has an unusually complex diversity

of soils (18 different types) and exposures, has grown to over 55 acres. There are 10 clones of Pinot Noir planted.

The annual production of 5,000 cases is now directed by Penner-Ash with assistance from winemaker Bryan Weil. A tasting room in a LEED Certified Gold facility is located on NE Worden Hill Road in Newberg and is open daily. The wines are also sold on the website at [www.alexanawinery.com](http://www.alexanawinery.com).

The winery offered 4 Pinot Noirs in 2012: Revana Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$48), Signature Pinot Noir (favorite 10 barrels of Pinot Noir from 2012 vintage, \$75, sold out), Black Label Pinot Noir (a wine club members exclusive, \$95), and Best Block Pinot Noir (produced from the finest block of Pinot Noir fruit in the estate from the 2012 vintage, 120 cases, \$125). Magnums and double magnums are available. Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Riesling are also offered.

**2012 Alexana Revana Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$48. Each cluster triple hand-sorted, individual blocks fermented separately, native yeast fermentation. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Extroverted aromas of black raspberry, blackberry jam, vanilla and barrique lead to a sweet attack of middleweight fruits including black raspberry and boysenberry. The fruit is very ripe in this vintage particularly by Oregon standards, and complimented by spicy oak, and firm, but nearly imperceptible tannins. A rich and sumptuous wine with a very long, generous and chewy finish. 93.*



**2012 Alexana Signature Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 250 cases, \$75. Favorite 10 barrels from the 2012 vintage. Aged 11 months in 38% new French oak barrels and bottle aged for 14 months before release. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. The pleasing nose is relatively shy, offering aromas of dark fruits and a hint of oak vanillin. Full-bodied, lush and concentrated on the palate, with layers of dark red and purple fruits. Impeccably balanced with enough tannic bones to age and a complimentary whisper of smoky oak, this wine retains a juicy, vibrancy despite its heft and finishes with uncommon length and purpose. An impressive wine that emotes. 95*



# En Garde: 2012 Pinots Very Promising

In July 2014, I reported on my first exposure to the 2012 wines of Csaba Szakal, the proprietor and winemaker of En Garde Winery in Sonoma Valley. Csaba launched his winery originally in Livermore in 2007, but soon quit his day job as a computer programmer, moved to Santa Rosa, and pursued fruit sources from the Russian River Valley. He began crafting his wines at the Mayo Winery facility in Sonoma Valley and opened a stylish tasting room nearby on Sonoma Highway.



The first En Garde Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs were released from the 2008 vintage. I visited Csaba this past summer and tasted some of the 2012 Pinot Noirs from barrel. I recently had the opportunity to taste the same wines from bottle. The vineyard-designated and reserve wines are still very young and the aromatics haven't fully arrived, but the wines are very promising and will show much better when released in the spring or summer of 2015.

Csaba told me both of his Pinot Noir vineyard sources were picked at about 25° Brix. The different clones were picked and processed individually over a two week period in early mid-October. Fermentation was whole berry with 10%-25% whole cluster after a 4 to 5-day cold soak. The Pinot Noirs were aged 10 - 18 months sur lie with battonage over the winter. The wines were bottled unfinned and unfiltered.

**2012 En Garde Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 175 cases, \$48. Released September 1, 2014. Martini and Pommard clones. Aged 10 months in 28% new French oak barrels. *Moderate cherry red color in the glass. Shy aromas of dark cherry with hints of nutty oak. Middleweight flavors of black cherry, dark raspberry, plum and cola with oak and dried herbs in the background. Very approachable and easy to drink, with supple tannins and a bright cut of acidity on the dry finish. Two bottles tasted. 87-88.*

**2012 En Garde Starkey Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 125 cases, \$54. Release summer 2015. 25% "828," 25% Pommard, 50% 23. 35-year-old vines planted in Goldridge soil and located just outside the Green Valley AVA. This vineyard is owned by Csaba's spouse's best friend. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose opens slowly in the glass to reveal scents of dusty cherry and strawberry. A plentiful black cherry attack is augmented with notes of spice, cola and tea. Nicely crafted with supple tannins, a good acid underbelly and a lip-smacking, cherry-driven finish.* **91-92.**



**2012 En Garde Olivet Court Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 100 cases, \$48. Release spring 2015. Martini clone. 40-year-old vines planted in gravelly, clay loam soil located across from De Loach Winery. Aged 18 months in 50% new Francois Frères oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very shy aromas of cherry and raspberry. Very tasty core of black cherry and black raspberry with a hint of dark chocolate and spice. Modest in weight with muscular tannins and a very lengthy finish. The least showy wine in the lineup, but should blossom with more time in bottle.* **90-91.**



**2012 En Garde Russian River Valley Reserve Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 150 cases, \$60. Release summer 2015. Clones "828," 23, Pommard and Martini. Aged 18 months in 80% new Francois Frères oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Extroverted nose featuring scents of Bing cherry, spice, tea and sous-bois. Delicious flavors of fresh, perfectly ripened strawberry, cherry and cranberry with harmoniously integrated oak. Very juicy and charming with plenty of grace, tannins so fine as to be imperceptible, and a long, powerfully scented finish. Still hitting on all cylinders the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **93-94.**

En Garde wines, which including a number of award-winning red varietals other than Pinot Noir, are sold through a mailing list, the website at [www.engardewinery.com](http://www.engardewinery.com), and the tasting room. The tasting room is open Thursday through Monday, and Tuesday and Wednesday by appointment. Reservations are recommended for a complete tasting experience, especially enjoyable if the charismatic Casaba presides over the tasting.

# Black Kite Cellars: Exceptional Pinot Noir in 2012

Black Kite Cellars produces small lots of expressive Pinot Noir with a strong sense of place. Whether from Black Kite's own Kite's Rest Vineyard in Anderson Valley, the Soberanes Vineyard in Santa Lucia Highlands, or Glass House Vineyard in Santa Lucia Highlands, each Black Kite Pinot Noir is treated to near-identical winemaking by winemaker Jeff Gaffner.

Black Kite Cellars produces less than 3,000 cases annually of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The wines are sold primarily through the winery mailing list at [www.blackkitecellars.com](http://www.blackkitecellars.com), with limited distribution to select wine retailers and restaurants.

The Black Kite Cellars Pinot Noirs never disappoint and will appeal to those who like plenty of concentrated ripe fruit flavor with generous oak backing. The 2012 wines reviewed here are among the best ever produced at this winery. The "Stony Terrace" and Soberanes Vineyard bottlings will be reviewed later.

**2012 Black Kite Cellars "Kite's Rest" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, 898 cases, \$48. Released November 2014. Aged 11 months in 100% new French oak barrels, 33% of which were new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Flamboyant nose of bright scents of black raspberry, blackberry, tea and expressive spice. The flavors echo the nose with added hints of black plum, cola and oak. Juicy, with admirable oak integration, modest tannins, and a generous cherry-driven finish. A welcoming wine that aims to please. 92.*



**2012 Black Kite Cellars "Redwoods' Edge" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14/9% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.57, 198 cases, \$60. Released November 2014. Aged 11 months in 100% French oak barrels, 66% of which were new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Elevating aromas of black cherry cordial, baking spice and vanilla.*

*Perks up the palate upon entry with delicious flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, plum, Asian 5-spice and vanilla. Very smoothly textured with hedonistic concentration and a balanced tannic backbone. Amazingly long finish fueled by bright acidity that lasts over 30 seconds. This wine really taps the pleasure centers in the brain. 94.*



**2012 Black Kite Cellars Glass House Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.57, 145 cases, \$48. Released November 2014. Aged 11 months in 100% French oak barrels, 50% of which were new. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of raspberry coulis, violets and chocolate. Dark berry flavors are featured with some savory undertones of mushroom and earth. Full-bodied with balanced tannins, toasty oak, and a soft finish featuring a generous, chewy burst of black cherry fruit. The wine was noticeably better with more integration of oak when tasted two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 92.*



# Dolin Estate: New Central Coast Pinots Offer Exceptional Value

Elliott and Lynn Dolin, proprietors of Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards, introduced a new lineup of Central Coast Pinot Noirs in late 2014. The inaugural Dolin Estate Pinot Noirs come from the 2012 vintage and include a Central Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir, a Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir and three single-vineyard Pinot Noir bottlings from Bien Nacido, Talley Rincon and Solomon Hills vineyards.

Dolin Estate was established in 2006 when the Dolins planted 900 Chardonnay vines on their Malibu property that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. Elliott, who was a former studio musician and performer in The Manhattan Transfer, developed an interest in wine when he fell in with a group of Los Angeles area wine collectors and began taking wine appreciation classes at UCLA.

Following the release of three vintages of Malibu Estate Chardonnay, the winery planned to expand its production, adding more Malibu wines from neighboring vineyards in the newly approved Malibu Coast AVA in 2015. Beyond this, working closely with Central Coast winemaker Kirby Anderson (there are no wineries in Malibu), and leveraging relationships with top growers, Elliott was able to secure Pinot Noir fruit from his favorite Central Coast vineyards. Anderson has vinified the Malibu Estate Chardonnay since 2010 and all the Pinot Noir offerings that began with the current 2012 vintage offering.



**2012 Dolin Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.35% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.57, 485 cases, \$32. Sourced from select vineyards. Clones 115, Pommard 4 and Swan selection. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 18% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The aromas really pop featuring black raspberry, plum, sandalwood and oak spice. This wine displays dreamy balance with soft tannins, bright acidity, and readily accessible flavors of very dark cherry, raspberry and plum with hints of cola and mocha. The finish is highly satisfying. 90.*

**2012 Dolin Talley Rincon Vineyard Arroyo Grande Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.56, 172 cases, \$45. Clones 667 and 777. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. There is plenty of charm in this wine that offers bright scents of plum, black raspberry, sous-bois and toasty oak. The luscious, rich core of boysenberry and plum fruits is backed by firm, fine-grain tannins. This is a mouth coating wine that is hedonistic yet angelic, and offers a very long and richly fruited finish.* **92.**

**2012 Dolin Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.61, TA 0.58, 128 cases, \$45. Clone 667. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, loamy earth, underbrush and oak lead to mid weight, tasty flavors of black raspberry, blueberry and black cherry. Juicy and refreshing with balanced tannins and a long, sleek finish.* **91.**

**2012 Dolin Solomon Hills Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.34% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.61, 140 cases, \$45. Clone 777. Aged 19 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Appealing scents of dark cherry cobbler, cassis and balsam. Plenty of oak-kissed dark red and purple fruits that satisfy with a noticeable attack and fullness. Silky in the mouth with modest tannins and some finishing length. This wine has more oak overlay than I prefer, but the texture is seductive.* **90.**

The wines are sold on the winery's website at [www.dolinestate.com](http://www.dolinestate.com) and through a mailing list. They are priced right with exceptional quality at the right price. The wines are also on the wine lists of some of Los Angeles's most prestigious restaurants.

# MacRostie Winery & Vineyards: Evolving to Embrace Quality

MacRostie, with a 27-year history of making Sonoma Coast wines, is a defining California winery and a familiar name to wine enthusiasts. The last several years have seen sweeping changes at MacRostie that include the sourcing of grapes from some of Sonoma Coast's most legendary vineyards and the building of a new winery and MacRostie Estate House on Westside Road in the Russian River Valley (the photo below shows the new project under construction in December).



The MacRostie Estate House is located on a hill overlooking Westside Road surrounded by the vines of the 13-acre estate Thale's Vineyard (named after Steve's spouse) planted to Pinot Noir. When completed in early 2015, the MacRostie Estate House will feature multiple indoor and outdoor tasting venues and an adjacent Pinot Noir-focused winery.

Steve began his winemaking career in 1974 at Hacienda Winery at a time most winemakers were fixated on Cabernet Sauvignon and the Napa Valley. Steve took another path and embraced the cooler vineyards of Sonoma County, producing exceptional Pinot Noir and Chardonnay at Hacienda during his twelve years at that winery. In 1987, Steve established MacRostie Winery and Vineyards and began his quest to champion quality in the region. By 1992, Pinot Noir had been added to the winery's portfolio, and MacRostie quickly developed a devoted following.

In 1998, Steve planted Wildcat Mountain Vineyard in partnership with Nancy and Tony Lilly. It is located in the Petaluma Gap region on the border of the Sonoma Coast appellation, and has been the source of exceptional MacRostie wines. Today, MacRostie works with more than 30 Chardonnay vineyards and over 15 Pinot Noir sites, representing a remarkable diversity for a small winery.

Since 2011, Steve MacRostie has been working alongside up-and-coming and innovative winemaker Heidi Bridenhagen to expand the MacRostie vineyard program. Although they both spend considerable time in all their vineyard sources, in recent years, they have called on viticultural

specialist Allen Holstein (Argyle Winery, Stoller Vineyards and Domaine Drouhin Oregon) to refine the winery's farming program.

The core of MacRostie's winegrowing program are five sites. **Wildcat Mountain Vineyard** possesses volcanic soils and is located in a cool, windy and foggy mountainous site resulting in low yields. Both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are planted here over 18 different blocks spread across five fields with a diversity of aspect. **Dutton Ranch**, guided by Steve and Joe Dutton, is a source of both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. **Sangiacomo Vineyard**, located in Sonoma Carneros, was MacRostie's earliest source of Chardonnay. The family owned vineyard is located along Sonoma Creek with vines planted between 1974 and 1994. **Goldrock Ridge Vineyard** is located near the town of Annapolis in the West Sonoma Coast region. Four clones of Pinot Noir are planted in Goldridge sandy loam at an elevation of 780 feet at the boundary of the fog line. The **MacRostie Estate Vineyard (Thale's Vineyard)** consists of young plantings of Pinot Noir in the Middle Reach of the Russian River Valley.

Steve and Heidi have also refined their approach to Chardonnay, and re-imagined the Pinot Noir program. They work with lots of Pinot Noir as small as 1 ton, doing upwards of 80 individual fermentations each vintage. Even though MacRostie's vineyard sources have grown to include some of Sonoma Coast's most notable winegrowing families including the Duttons, Sangiacomos, Martinellis and Bacigalupis, the MacRostie style remains consistent - balanced wines with bright acidity and judicious use of new French oak.

As evidence that MacRostie is evolving over time to embrace quality, the winery became the first Sonoma Coast winery to bottle all wines under screwcap.

This was my first opportunity to extensively taste MacRostie wines. They were highly approachable and elegant, with modest tannins and minimal oak overlay. The wines represent outstanding value relative to quality and should be sought out. Visit the website at [www.macrostiewinery.com](http://www.macrostiewinery.com) to obtain the wines and plan to visit the new MacRostie Estate House when it opens early this year. Besides the wines reviewed here there is a 2012 25th Anniversary Russian River Valley Pinot Noir that celebrates MacRostie's 25 years as a Sonoma winery and the opening of the new winery in the Russian River Valley (a six barrel selection, \$54).

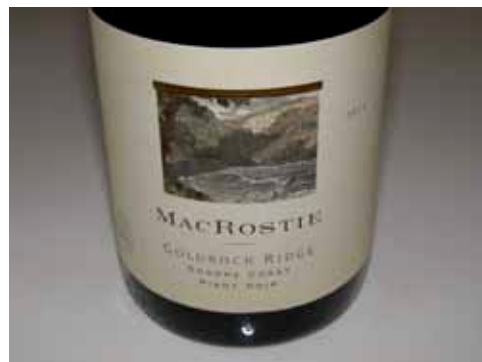
**2012 MacRostie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 4,174 cases, \$34, screwcap. Sourced from Champlin Creek and Wildcat Mountain vineyards in the Sonoma Coast, Hellenthal Vineyard in Fort Ross-Seaview, and Dutton-Hallberg Ranch in the Russian River Valley. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated yeast fermentation, punch downs and pump overs, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 30% of which were new. *Moderately light ruby color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of cherry, plum and huckleberry with a complimentary touch of spice and oak. Soft and smooth in the mouth with balanced tannins and some finishing fruit presence. Easy to drink. 89.*

**2012 MacRostie Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 486 cases, \$42, screwcap. Sourced from several vineyards. 100% de-stemmed, punch downs twice a day in 5-ton fermenters, aged in French oak barrels of which 26% were new, 31% one-year-old and the remaining neutral. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose opens with appealing aromas of black cherry and dark raspberry, but oak-driven scents of char and tobacco smoke take over. More appealing on the palate where the wine is relatively light in weight with inviting elegance. Forward and easy drinking with a modest attack of Bing cherry, cola and saffras flavors backed by lively acidity and mild tannins, the wine finishes with an array of darker stone and berry fruits. 88.*

**2012 MacRostie Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 878 cases, \$48, screwcap. Mostly clones 667 and 777. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated yeast fermentation,

combination of punch downs and punch overs, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 28% of which were new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Alluring scents of cherry, raspberry, underbrush, spice and subtle oak. Seamless and polished, with mid weight flavors of cherry and red berries accented with a hint of spice and citrus. Very classy, with soft tannins and a dry, refined finish with impressive length. A sensual wine with nuance.* **91.**

**2012 MacRostie Goldrock Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 290 cases, \$54, screwcap. Clones 777 and "828." 100% de-stemmed, inoculated yeast fermentation, a combination of pump overs and punch downs. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 30% of which were new. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry pie glaze, blackberry jam, oak cask and pipe smoke. Crisp and vibrant, with layers of flavor including dark red and purple berries, black cherry, anise and black tea. Veers to the riper side but retains impressive Pinot character. Lively acidity drives the refreshing and very lengthy finish which is highly satisfying.* **92.**



**2012 MacRostie Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., 24,372 cases, \$25, screwcap. Sourced from multiple Sonoma Coast, Sonoma Carneros and Russian River Valley vineyards. Whole cluster pressed, 100% MLF, aged 6 months on the lees in French oak barrels with occasional battonage, 18% of which were new. A few lots were fermented in stainless steel. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of lemon, jasmine and toasty oak. Welcoming flavors of apple, pear and citrus with a hint of nutty oak. Slightly creamy in the mouth with a bright, citrus-infused finish that urges the drinker to take another sip.* **89.**

**2012 MacRostie Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 406 cases, \$32, screwcap. The majority of the grapes were from Keefer Ranch and Dutton-Jewell Ranch, both in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Whole cluster pressed, partial MLF, aged on the lees for 9 months in French oak barrels, 21% of which were new. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. A solid offering featuring aromas of lemon-lime, fresh-cut apple and mango. Slightly viscous on the palate with flavors of citrus, apple, brioche and butter toffee, finishing with a wealth of apple flavor.* **88.**

**2012 MacRostie Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 763 cases, \$38. Whole cluster pressed, 100% MLF, aged 10 months on the lees with battonage in French oak barrels, 21% of which were new. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Demure but pleasing aromas of lemon rind, honey, juniper berry and toasty oak lead to tightly wound flavors of lemon, butterscotch, vanilla and toast with a hint of sea spray in the background. Distinctively different from the other MacRostie Chardonnays, this wine challenges the senses, and offers the most lingering finish.* **92.**



**2012 MacRostie Sangiacomo Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay** 177 cases, \$44, screwcap. Whole cluster pressed, 100% MLF, aged 10 months on the lees in French oak barrels. After assembling the blend, seven barrels were chosen, two of which were new. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Plenty to like in this wine with hi-tone aromas of lemon curd, honeysuckle, vanilla and toast. Plenty of acidic verve compliments and lifts the lemon, pear and biscuit flavors. Good fullness and creaminess on the palate with a tangy, lemon and pear infused finish.* **90.**

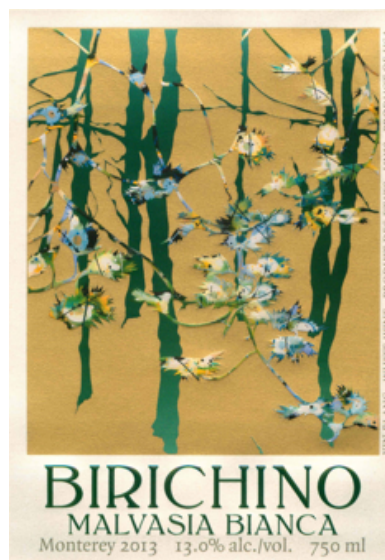
**2012 MacRostie Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 281 cases, \$44, screwcap. Whole cluster pressed, 100% MLF, aged on the lees with occasional battonage for 10 months in French oak barrels, 25% of which were new. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. A complex offering with plenty of aromatic goodness including scents of white peach, lemon rind, tangerine and floral bouquet. Very pleasing in the mouth with a slightly viscous texture, beautifully integrated oak highlights, and pleasing lemon and apple flavors. Great harmony, finishing with admirable tension and citrus infused delight. 92.*

# Birichino: A Mischievous Pair Craft Unique Wines at Right Price

Laid back owners and winemakers Alex Krause and John Locke draw on a combined 35 years of making and selling wine in California, Alsace, Puglia, Piemonte and beyond. The name of the winery, Birichino, pronounced “biro-kino,” is Italian meaning naughty or mischievous.

The winery was originally launched in 2008 to make Malvasia, not a varietal that is well known or in big demand in California. Malvasia is a group of wine grape varieties of ancient origin, most likely originating in Greece. Malvesia Bianca is the most well known of the tribe, and is grown widely in many of the winemaking regions of the world including Italy, the San Joaquin Valley of California, the Greek Islands and Rioja.

The Birichino Malvasia Bianca is from a limestone and rocky shale site planted with 25-year-old vines on the Santa Lucia Highlands side of Monterey County. The 2013 vintage of this wine is remarkable for its floral expression and is one of the **best white wines, bar none**, I have drank in the past several years. At \$16, it is a crazy value.



Birichino recently introduced the 2013 Pétillant Naturel Malvasia Bianca, an old school version of sparkling wine. Pétillants naturels (Pét Nats) are the rage among wine hipster cognoscenti. They are essentially bottle-conditioned wines with the residual carbon dioxide produced by fermentation creating the bubbles, and the richness and texture imparted by the lees remaining a part of the finished wine. No sugar or yeast is added to augment the spritz, instead relying on just those that came in on the grapes from which they are made, and the wine is not disgorged. Each bottle has a variable amount of gentle fizz and amount of residual sweetness as the wines are not adjusted post secondary fermentation.

The original pétillant was an 18-bottle lot Alex and John made one afternoon in late 2012 on Alex’s deck from a little Malvasia and actively fermenting Muscat Canelli. The wine was tucked away in the garage and turned out to be delicious. In 2013, the same basic protocol was followed drawing on Malvasia Bianca and a small amount of Muscat Canelli from adjacent 25-year-old blocks in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Each bottle was filled and capped by hand, and because of the increased production a hundredfold, the vintners outgrew the space on their deck and made it at a winery.

Soon after the Birichino Winery was launched, the winery's United Kingdom importer begged for a red wine, and the owners branched out to produce a wine from 104-year-old, own-rooted and dry-farmed Grenache grapes. Then, only days before harvest in 2011, they were offered the chance to work with the 25-year-old Pinot Noir Saint Georges Vineyard owned by the same family that grew the Grenache. The vineyard is located on the eastern side of the Santa Cruz Mountains and is named after the owners, father and son, George Besson, Jr., and Sr., whose families have lived on the property since the 1920s tending the vines. Most of the Pinot Noir had, and still does, go to Calera Wine Company.

A second Pinot Noir source subsequently became available. The 4.5-acre, 12-year-old, Lilo Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains is located at a very cool, steep site, planted in slate, sandstone and schist and sits at the fog line at 600 to 800 feet.

Birichino offers wines of character at the right price. Wines offered besides the wines discussed above include: Old Vines Grenache, Old Vines Zinfandel, Old Vines Chenin Blanc, Old Vines Cinsault, Vin Gris, and Muscat Canelli. Visit the website at [www.birichino.com](http://www.birichino.com) for more information and to buy the wines.



**2013 Birichino Saint Georges Central Coast Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., \$21. A small amount of young vine fruit from Lilo Vineyard was added. 20% whole cluster, native yeast fermentation, aged in neutral French oak barrels and bottled unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is highly fragrant with aromas of cherry, raspberry jam on toast, and sous-bois. Relatively light in weight, but highly flavorful, offering plenty of well-spiced cherry and raspberry goodness. Soft and delicate in the mouth with modest tannins and a raspberry-infused finish of some note. Very forward and charming.* **90.**



**2012 Birichino Lilo Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.55, \$33. Aged a little more than a year in old French oak barrels and bottled unfiltered. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Darker fruits are featured in this wine which has an earthy, woody flora bent. Very suave and polished on the palate with flavors of boysenberry and black plum accented with spice and tea. Beautifully balanced with well-integrated tannins. Even better later in the day from a previously opened bottle. More cajones than the Saint Georges bottling.* **90.**





# Domaine de la Côte: Whole Cluster Goodness

Domaine de la Côte is a French-inspired winery evident from the name and labels that was launched with the 2011 vintage following the purchase of 40 acres of vineyards in the Sta. Rita Hills from Evening Land Vineyards by sommelier Rajat Parr winemaker Sashi Moorman, and their business partners. Moorman discovered the site and originally developed the vineyards with Chris King in 2007.

The six vineyards are just seven miles from the Pacific Ocean and are planted on a soil base of silex and diatomaceous earth that is unique to the Sta. Rita Hills. The vineyards are Memorious (3.5 acres), Bloom's Field (7.5 acres), Siren's Call (3 acres), Clos Juliet (1 Acre), La Côte (9.5 acres) and 15.5 acres of appellation Sta. Rita Hills. The vineyards are planted entirely to California heritage selections at extremely high vine densities between 4,000 and 7,000 vines per acre, unprecedented for the Sta. Rita Hills appellation.

The partners make the unique wines using whole cluster and ambient yeast fermentation, add no enzymes, and age the wines in no new French oak barrels. The wines are produced in Lompoc, three miles from the vineyards.

2012 was a classic vintage at the Domaine. Harvest started during the first weeks of September, preceded by consistently warm afternoons and cool nights and mornings throughout the summer. Yields were low.

The wines are sold by allocation to mailing list members and select restaurants. Visit the website at [www.domainedelacote.com](http://www.domainedelacote.com).



**2012 Domaine de la Côte Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 12.5% alc., 2,100 cases, \$45. 25% of vines are own-rooted at a vine density of 4,000 vines per acre. 50% whole cluster fermentation, aged in 0% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is replete with whole cluster goodness including aromas of wilted rose, spice and wet bark. Fresh and juicy with mid weight flavors of purple berries and spice and a floral note in the background. Easy to approach now with supple but structured tannins and a tangy finish.* **90.**

**2012 Domaine de la Côte Bloom's Field Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 12.5% alc., 500 cases, \$70. 100% whole cluster fermentation, aged in 0% new French oak barrels for 20 months. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is similar to the Sta. Rita Hills bottling with rose petal*

and spice playing a large role, but the aromas are more penetrating. Round, polished and discreetly concentrated with upfront flavors of blueberry and black raspberry. Nicely balanced with modest tannins and plenty of zip and zing. **92.**



**2012 Domaine de la Côte La Côte Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., 300 cases, \$90.

From a small section of a 9-acre parcel that is planted in broken shale. The first vineyard harvested and always produces the most opulent wine. 100% whole cluster fermentation, aged in 0% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass.*

*Compelling aromas of boysenberry, black raspberry, spice and purple rose. Very smooth and polished on the palate with layers of purple berry, plum, and spice flavors. Impeccably balanced with tannins hiding in the background, juicy acidity, and a remarkably intense finish. Still a little moody and will benefit from more time in bottle. This wine is the epitome of ephemeral. **94.***

# Skewis Wines: Pinot from Vineyards with a Pedigree

Hank and Maggie Skewis are veterans who have been offering Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast and Anderson Valley since 1994. That year, grower Fred Peterson of the Floodgate Vineyard in Anderson Valley (now owned by Goldeneye and renamed) offered enough grapes to make 70 cases. Today, Hank crafts less 900 cases annually of Pinot Noir working out of a shared crush facility.

The emphasis is on low yields from vineyards located in premium growing regions. The average crops in the vineyards that are contracted yield on average of 2 to 2.5 tons per acre. In the winery, grapes are de-stemmed, fermented with a significant percentage of whole berries, fermented warm for maximum extraction of color, phenolics and complexity, then pressed into French oak barrels for 18 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered, the wines are aged an additional 6+ months in bottle before release in October of each year.

Vineyard sources have changed through the years but quality has always remained high. The 2012 Pinot Noir from Wiley Vineyard in the Anderson Valley is the first release by Skewis from this vineyard. The wines typically age extremely well.

The wines are sold on the winery's website at [www.skewis.com](http://www.skewis.com), through a mailing list, and through limited distribution in Northern California. A quaint tasting room (pictured below) is open Friday through Sunday at 57 Front Street in the historic Roma Station Winery complex in Healdsburg. Tasting is available on other days by appointment.



**2012 Skewis Lingenfelder Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.60, 150 cases, \$50. Released September 8, 2014. From a 3-acre vineyard west of the town of Fulton. Huichica loam soil typical of this area. Vineyard planted in 1996 and grafted to the Martini clone. Harvest Brix 23.3°. Aged 18 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby color in the glass. Very shy nose with demure aromas of cherry sous-bois and subtle oak. Juicy, mid weight flavors of ripe strawberries, dark cherries and black raspberries. The finish is bright and pleasingly*

*long. Much better on the palate over time in the glass and more showy the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 89-90.*

**2012 Skewis Salzgeber-Chan Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.85, 150 cases, \$50. Released September 8, 2014. Harvest Brix 24.4°. This 3-acre vineyard was planted in 1997. Dijon clone 115. Aged 18 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby color in the glass. This wine is a cherry bombast with a modest oak overlay on the nose and palate. Very flavorful with remarkable persistence on the finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, more fruit had emerged, some cola and spice showed up, and the wine was more pleasing. Best to cellar this wine a year or so. 90-91.*

**2012 Skewis Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**

14.4% alc., pH 3.80, 185 cases, \$50. This vineyard was first planted in 1972 in the deep end of the Anderson Valley. Over the years the plantings have increased to 20 acres of Pinot Noir. This wine was made from grapes planted in 1982 and 2002; Pommard and Mt. Eden clones. Harvest Brix 25.0°. Released September 8, 2014. Aged 18 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose opens gradually to reveal inviting aromas of black cherry, sous-bois and complimentary sweet oak. Very smooth in the mouth with gossamer tannins, offering a joyous mix of black cherry and black raspberry flavors that attack the mid palate with purpose and hold on through a generous finish. A whisper of oak plies the background. Delightful. 91-92.*



# DANCIN Vineyards: Rogue Valley Wines of Distinction

There are notable Pinot Noir producers in Oregon that are not in the famed Willamette Valley. DANCIN Vineyards, located in the western forested foothills of Southern Oregon, is a good example.



Dan and Cindy Marca studied viticulture for ten years and in 2006 they bought a 15-acre property near Jacksonville in the Rogue Valley. The site is near where pioneer Peter Britt started his first vineyard nearly 150 years ago, likely the first planting of Pinot Noir in Oregon. They named the estate DANCIN Vineyards after the first three letters of each of their names.

The three vineyard sites consist of just over 19 acres with 67% planted to Pinot Noir (seven clones) and the remainder to Chardonnay. The site, situated at 1,500 to 1,700 feet elevation, has a unique exposure that it is shaded for up to two hours a day at the warmest time of day, making it suitable for growing Pinot Noir.

The wines are crafted by winemaker Linda Donovan from Pallet Wine Company in Medford, Oregon, who has experience with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay working at Flowers Vineyard & Winery on the Sonoma Coast of California.

A Tuscan-styled tasting room offers views of the Cascade Range and a wine cave houses barreled and bottled wines. Once all plantings have reached maturity, the expected production of estate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay (and Syrah and Port) will be 3,000-3,600 cases. Visit the website at [www.dancinvineyards](http://www.dancinvineyards) for more information or to buy wines.



**2012 DANCIN Vineyards “Élevé” Barrel Select Southern Oregon Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 99 cases, \$34. Named after a ballet movement in which you rise up high on to the balls of your feet relates to the grapes for this wine sourced from the estate’s highest elevation vineyard at nearly 2,000 feet. A blend of 777, Pommard and 115. 100% de-stemmed, fermented in small bins with indigenous yeast, aged 15 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black raspberry, black cherry and cigar box evolve slowly over time in the glass. Ripe-fruited and robust on the palate with sappy flavors of black cherry and black raspberry framed by firm but felty tannins and juicy acidity. Some of the black cherry fragrance returns to haunt the lengthy finish.* **90.**

**2012 DANCIN Vineyards “Trata” Southern Oregon Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 150 cases, \$34. Clones Wädenswil 2A, 114, 667 and “828.” 100% de-stemmed, indigenous yeast fermentation, aged 15 months in 44.44% new French oak barrels. *Moderate light black cherry color in the glass. A bit shy, but pleasing marriage of underbrush, red cherry, spice and oak aromas. Mid weight flavors of red cherries and berries with a subtle savory herb note in the background. Unobtrusive tannins, refreshing acidity and some finishing goodness. Two bottles tasted.* **88.**



**2012 DANCIN Vineyards “Chastinelle Reserve” Southern Oregon Chardonnay** 13.7% alc., 100 cases, \$30. A blend of five clones (Robert Young, Espiguetta 352, Dijon 76, Wente and Draper) grown on the estate and neighboring Panner-Hanson Vineyard. Indigenous yeast fermentation, aged sur lie in a blend of neutral French oak barrels and stainless steel barrels. Weekly battonage. Aged 7 months. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. The nose is fresh and bright, with inviting aromas of lemon, peach and tropical fruits. Slightly creamy on the palate with vibrant flavors of lemon, pear and peach and a subtle accent of tropical fruits and oak in the background. A superb wine with excellent harmony, a gentle demeanor, and a good cut of refreshing acidity on the smooth, lemon drop-driven finish.* **94.**



# Waxwing: Engaging Pinot from an Urban Winery

Winemaker Scott Sisemore has a unique story. He is a stay-at-home Dad helping to raise two young boys while his spouse, Joanne, pursues a successful career in the biotech industry. His boys are both in school now, so he can devote more time to winemaking. In 2014, he was able to leave his subleased space in San Carlos south of San Francisco, and rent his own dedicated winemaking facility in nearby Belmont. He spent much of the year outfitting the new space for wine production. Thankfully, Scott now has complete control over the winemaking process, something every winemaker ultimately desires. This last harvest he crushed 17 tons of Pinot Noir, Syrah and Riesling.

Scott has worked with Spring Hill Vineyard in the Petaluma Gap since 2010 and has sourced Pinot Noir and Syrah from Lester Family Vineyard near Corralitos in the Santa Cruz Mountains since 2012. He describes the 2013 wines as “easy to make.”



Waxwing wines are sold on the website at [www.waxwingwines.com](http://www.waxwingwines.com), and distributed to retailers and restaurants in California.

**2013 Waxwing Spring Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 208 cases, \$39. Released late 2014. 75% de-stemmed as whole berries with 25% foot-stomped whole cluster in the fermenter. 5-day cold soak, punch downs 2 to 3 times a day, and pressed to barrel at end of fermentation. The wine was aged 11 months in once-used French oak barrels and bottled with no filtration. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers demure aromas of cherry and dried herbs. In the mouth, tannins and oak currently overwhelm the mid weight core of black cherry fruit which offers promise. The finish is dry and slightly astringent and laced with oak. This wine needs at least a year or two in bottle for the ruddy tannins to soften and the oak to integrate.* **88-89.**



**2013 Waxwing Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 123 cases, \$39. Vines planted in 1998 on a sandy loam hillside bordered by redwoods. Sustainable viticultural practices, careful canopy management, minimal late season deficit irrigation.

A mix of Dijon and heritage clones including Mt. Eden, Wädenswil and Mariafeld. 50% of fruit de-stemmed as whole berries and 50% foot-stomped whole cluster. 5-day cold soak, native fermentation, aged 11 months in once-used French oak barrels. *Moderately light cherry color in the glass. Plenty of lovely whole cluster spice on the nose along with aromas of cherry, rose petal and sandalwood. Delicious middleweight flavors of red cherry, red raspberry, spice and crystallized rose. Bright with good tension and balanced tannins, finishing clean and uplifting. I could drink this all day. 94.*



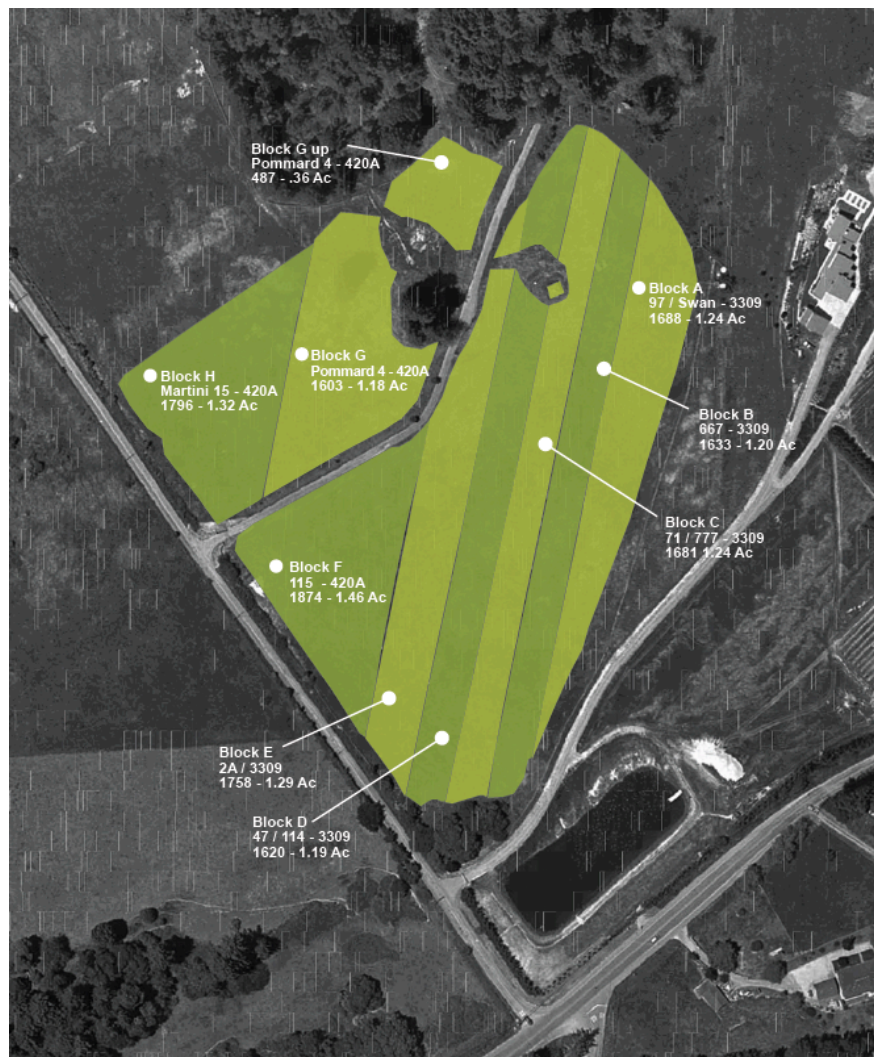


# MacPhail Proudly Releases First Estate Pinot Noir

Proprietor and winemaker James MacPhail has been crafting compelling wines from many Anderson Valley and Sonoma Coast vineyards for many years. Currently, Pinot Noir is sourced from ten vineyards, including Toulouse, Fratley Shams, Wightman House, Ferrington, Cerise, and Demuth in Anderson Valley, and Gap's Crown, Goodin, Pratt and Sangiacomo in the Sonoma Coast.



The 2012 vintage marks a milestone for MacPhail Family Wines: the release of the inaugural Mardikian Vineyard Estate Pinot Noir. The vineyard was planted in 2008 in one of the coolest reaches of the West Sonoma Coast. Working with Jim Pratt, eight clones were selected and planted on westerly facing slopes that are often layered with tufts of cottony fog in the mornings.





**2012 MacPhail Mardikian Estate Sonoma Coast Pinot**

**Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.56, 283 cases, \$85.

Limited release November 2014. Harvest Brix 26.5°-26.7°.  
Pommard, Martini, Wädenswil 2A and 114 clones. 100%

de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native malolactic  
fermentation in barrels, battonage weekly for 3 months,

aged 16 months sur lie in French oak barrels, 50% of which were  
new. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the  
glass. The nose shows off a commendable balance between  
darker cherry and berry fruits and oak. Delicious mid weight core  
of black cherry goodness with hints of spice, cola and mocha and  
a whisper of oak. Satiny smooth in the mouth with complimentary tannins and a finish that saturates  
the senses. This wine really hits the mark with emphasis. 94.*



# Sips of Recently Tasted Pinot Noir

## Briceland Vineyards, Humboldt County



**2013 Briceland Vineyards Humboldt County Pinot Noir** 13.6% alc., 212 cases, \$31. A blend from four southern Humboldt County vineyards: Lost Coast, Espey, Elk Prairie and Phelps. Aged 1 year in a combination of mostly older Virginia and French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose has a prominent oak overlay with clove and vanilla scents dominating the black cherry fruit. Much better on the palate with a mid weight charge of cherry and raspberry fruit that fills the mouth with plenty of sweet sap. A mellow wine with plenty of Pinot charm sporting modest tannins and crisp acidity. Considerably more appealing the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with plenty of black cherry and spice presence supported by oak.* **89.**



**2013 Briceland Vineyards Phelps Vineyard Humboldt County Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 148 cases, \$35. Aged 1 year in a combination of Virginia and French oak barrels of which about 20% were new. Unfined and unfiltered. *Medium reddish purple hue in the glass. A cherry-fueled wine with notes of conifer and oak adding a notable contribution. Discreetly concentrated with juicy acidity and a long, cherry-fueled finish. Much better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with better integration of oak.* **90.**

## Clos Saron, Sierra Foothills

The estate Clos Saron Home Vineyard is 2.2-acres containing 4,500 own-rooted vines planted in red loam and clay topsoil on decomposed granite and volcanic ash subsoil sprinkled with granite rocks, basalt and quartz. It is located at an elevation of 1,600 feet in the Oregon House Valley in the Sierra Foothills. The vines are dry farmed, and sustained by combining organic and biodynamic principles. Every vine is tended to numerous times during the season.

Winemaker Gideon Bienstock vinifies his Home Vineyard Pinot Noir according to the following protocol. The grapes are de-stemmed and crushed within 20 minutes of harvest. The must ferments in open-top oak fermenters coopered by the Rousseau family in Gevrey Chambertin. Ambient yeast drive fermentation and there is no malolactic inoculation, acid corrections and no SO<sub>2</sub> additions during barrel aging. The wines are aged sur lie as long as necessary until bottled manually directly from barrel, unfined and unfiltered.

I have been a fan of the wines because they are unique and distinctly different from Pinot Noir made in other winegrowing regions of California. The wines are typically concentrated, earthy and tannic, and reward long cellaring. Visit the website at [www.clossaron.com](http://www.clossaron.com).

**2012 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** 13.3% alc., 119 cases, \$60. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is reluctant to offer its charms, showing primarily aromas of wine cave and oak. More expressive the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with blackberry and black currant fruit aromas showing up. Rich and sappy, rugged but not harsh, with mouth coating black raspberry and black cherry fruit backed by muscular tannins. The palate was also more appealing the following day. Cellar this wine for at least three years.* **89-90.**

**2012 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Lower Block Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., 48 cases, \$65. From the coolest microclimate of the Home Vineyard. Vines planted in 1999. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. The fruit never shows up on the nose, even the next day, offering only aromas of underbrush, cardamom spice and iron. More expressive on the palate with a very tasty core of blueberry and boysenberry fruits backed by proportional dry tannins and lively acidity. The finish is particularly notable for its persistence compared to the other 2012 Home Vineyard Pinot Noirs. More sweet boysenberry fruit showed up the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Still tight and needs a few years in the cellar. 90-91.*

**2012 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Old Block Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 24 cases, \$75. From the oldest .5-acre section of the Home Vineyard. Own-rooted vines planted in 1980. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Generous aromas of black cherry, cassis and sous-bois. Very refined and balanced with mouth filling flavors of black cherry and black raspberry. Powerful, but sleek, with cleansing acidity and a very appealing, long and sweet cherry finish. Considerably more giving and interesting the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 91-92.*

**2007 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 82 cases. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Hi-tone aromas of blackberry, black currant, Prada leather coat and oak vanillin rise from the glass. Generously fruited with sappy flavors of black raspberry, and blackberry. Firm, but balanced tannins, and a big finish plush with fruit goodness. I really liked this wine best among the older vintages tasted together on this day. Still compelling the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Drink or hold for up to 10 years. 93.*



**2006 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 78 cases. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, forest floor, wet loam and a hint of smoky oak. Impressive freshness with flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and black plum. Pleasing integration of tannins and a very long and satisfying finish. Drink within the next five years. 91.*

**2005 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** 13.3% alc., 40 cases. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. The nose has taken on secondary characteristics of iron, ash, decayed earthy flora and iodine. The medium weighted black cherry, black raspberry, ripe strawberry black tea and oak flavors are fresh and concentrated. The wine is not tired or fading, and still bright and flavorful. Some may find the muscular tannins too daunting. Drink up or can hold another few years. This wine that will appeal to fans of aged Pinot Noir. 89.*

## **COBB, Sonoma Coast**

**2012 COBB Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.5% alc., 225 cases, \$70. From a 6-acre vineyard located near Sebastopol. Dijon clones and Swan selection planted in Goldridge soils. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, spice, rose petal and espresso. Silky and polished in the mouth, with an attack of fresh cherry and raspberry fruit with a hint of spice and cranberry. Impeccably balanced with a good acid backbone, soft tannins, and finishing lift. 90.*

**2012 COBB Coastlands Vineyard Old Firs Block Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., 300 cases, \$80. This 14-acre vineyard sits on a ridge in Occidental in the far western Sonoma Coast. A variety of selections including Martini and Wädenswil were planted in this block in 1989, some of the oldest vines on the West Sonoma Coast. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. This is an extraordinary wine that is still cloaked in a significant oak overlay. Aromas of dark cherries, conifer, espresso and toast lead to a delicious cherry core of fruit that is dominated by oak. Juicy acidity adds tension, and contributes to the vibrant finish which is exceptional for its generosity and persistence. This wine needs at least a year in the cellar to better integrate the oak.* **92-93.**



## **Lange Estate Winery & Vineyard, Dundee Hills, Oregon**

**2012 Lange Three Hills Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$38, screwcap. Sourced from Lange Estate, Freedom Hill and Yamhill vineyards. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black raspberry, plum and espresso oak. Modest in weight, but packed with flavor, offering tastes of black raspberry, black cherry, and pomegranate with a touch of oak and dark chocolate. Welcoming softness in the mouth with admirable balance and good tannic bones for the long term.* **90.**



**2012 Lange Estate Reserve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., \$35, screwcap. Estate grown. A barrel selection. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Restrained aromas of blackberry and black raspberry. More expressive on the palate with luscious blueberry, pomegranate, plum, black raspberry and spice flavors with a compliment of oak in the background. Round and polished with a soft, smooth mouth feel and a memorable fruit-driven finish.* **91.**



**2012 Lange Yamhill-Carlton Assemblage Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., 200 cases, \$70, screwcap. Sourced from vineyards with Willakenzie soils. *Dark reddish purple hue in the glass. Shy, but pleasant scents of ripe dark fruits. Full-bodied attack of dark berries with length and soothing flavor. The tannins are well matched and there is a good cut of underlying acidity. The finish is plush with boysenberry fruit. The nose was still shy the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating this wine needs more time in bottle.* **91.**

## **Pisoni Estate, Santa Lucia Highlands**

The Pisonis are now celebrating three decades of farming cool-climate grapes making the 2012 vintage extra special. Everyone told Gary Pisoni he was crazy in 1982 when he wanted to plant Pinot Noir in the Santa Lucia Highlands at a time wine experts were recommending Riesling, Gamay Noir and Pinot Blanc. Gary knew better, and he thought the rugged, wind-shipped mountain rising 1,300 feet above sea level with a flinty, granite-laden soil would be ideal for making great Pinot Noir. The only drawback was the lack of water, but this was solved by daily treks with a water truck from the

Salinas Valley floor to irrigate the tender vines. After eight years of water witchers and the drilling of five dry wells, a suitable water source was discovered. Gary now works side-by-side with sons Mark who manages the vineyard and Jeff who makes the Pisoni and Lucia wines.



**2012 Pisoni Estate Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.2%, \$75. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. The aromas leap from the glass including blackberry, cardamom spice and oak vanillin. Juicy and full-bodied, but not jammy, with a gorgeous fruit core of blackberries, boysenberries and plums framed by generous, but balanced tannins. Some earth-based goodness chimes in as well. The fruit clings to every nook and cranny and refuses to go away, displaying a sweet, tenacious finish of uncommon length. Even better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very approachable now, but has the stuff to last 20 years. I thought I had died and gone to heaven when I tasted this beauty. 98.*



## **Privé Vineyard, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon**

In the words of Tina Hammond, “2013 was a wonderful vintage, with a sunny and warm growing season ending in a cool fall.” Tina recommends holding the wines for at least 12 months in your cellar before opening. After tasting the wines, I agree. The wines are not as big and sappy and showy as the 2012 vintage. Both wines are 100% Pommard clone on vines planted in 1980 in Jory soil.

**2013 Privé Vineyard le nord Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 12.9% alc., \$59. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Complex aromatic profile that reveals itself slowly in the glass including scents of Bing cherry, spice, rose petal and conifer. The core of cherry fruit is tight but promising with subtle notes of mocha, cola and oak in the background. Velvety in the mouth with a reserved finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the*

aromatics were much more alive with more spice, rose and cherry, but the fruit was still reluctant to show its stuff. Decant if you must drink now, but preferably wait at least a year. **90-92.**



**2013 Privé le sud Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., \$69. *Moderately light cherry color in the glass. Enticing aromas of cherry, leaf, spice and balsam lead to a mid weight core of fresh and juicy cherry flavor with a whisper of oak in the background.*

*Very elegant and more giving than the le nord, with suave tannins and a deeply aromatic, cherry-fueled finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, the nose was more expressive. Two days later, the wine was still hitting on all cylinders. Patience will be rewarded. **92-94.***



## Ransom Wine Company, Sheridan, Oregon

**2013 Ransom Jigsaw Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 12.8% alc., pH 3.75, TA 0.58, 3,136 cases, \$19. Multiple clones from multiple vineyards in three AVAs. 100% de-stemmed, high percentage of whole berries sent to 1.5-ton open-top fermenters. 4-day cold soak, wild and inoculated yeast fermentation, hand punch downs two to three times a day. Aged 10 months, blended, filtered and bottled. *Moderately light red cherry color in the glass. Demure aromas of cherry, tea leaf and subtle oak. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry and raspberry with supportive oak. Juicy, with decent tension, a silky texture, and mild tannins. An easy drinking wine that lacks flash or finish, but will perform nicely at the dinner table. **86.***



**2012 Ransom Selection Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 12.6% alc., pH 3.32, TA 0.65, 781 cases, \$29. Harvest Brix 23.2° (average). Sourced from JMD, Temperance Hill, Zielinski, and Johan vineyards. Dijon, Pommard and Wädenswil clones. 100% de-stemmed with a high percentage of whole berries sent to 1.5-ton fermenters.

6-day cold soak, wild and inoculated yeast fermentation. Aged 16 months in mixed French oak cooperage one to two-years-old.

100% free-run juice with no fining or filtration. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Scents of black cherry, forest floor, conifer and seasoned oak lead to mid weight flavors of bright*

*cherry, raspberry and Damson plum fruits that coat the mouth and persist through a citrus and cranberry imbued finish that has some persistence. Silky smooth on the palate with the balance weighted toward vibrant acidity. Tasted twice. **88-89.***



## Rhys Vineyards, Santa Cruz Mountains

**2012 Rhys Family Farm Vineyard San Mateo County Pinot Noir** 13.1% alc., \$59. From a 6.16-acre vineyard planted to Rhys selection, Swan, 115 and Pommard. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is quite inviting, with aromas of black cherry, exotic spices, anise and sarsaparilla. Bright, juicy and very approachable, with flavors of cherry, raspberry, cola, and oak-driven toast and spice. Very elegant and charming, with mild tannins and a silky texture. Finishes easy, but a little short. **90.***

**2012 Rhys Home Vineyard San Mateo County Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., \$79. From a small, 1.57-acre vineyard containing a mixed field blend of selections. *Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. The nose is closed for business initially, opening more the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Darker cherry and raspberry flavors are featured. Very tasty, and soft and smooth in the mouth. Finishes with showy oak and slightly astringent tannins. Lacks some excitement now, and should be cellared for at least a year.* **89-90.**

**2012 Rhys Alpine Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 12.9% alc., \$69. From an 11-acre vineyard planted to Rhys selection and heritage clones. 12-24" topsoil over soft shale at 1230' to 1400' elevation. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very complex nose with scents of alpine strawberry, raspberry, black cherry, conifer, sous-bois, spice and rose petal dancing in and out over time. Softly textured, harmonious and very approachable, with a tasty black cherry core framed by modest tannins and juicy acidity. Still showing a blanket of oak that will integrate over time. Finishes with impressive length and generosity.* **91-92.**

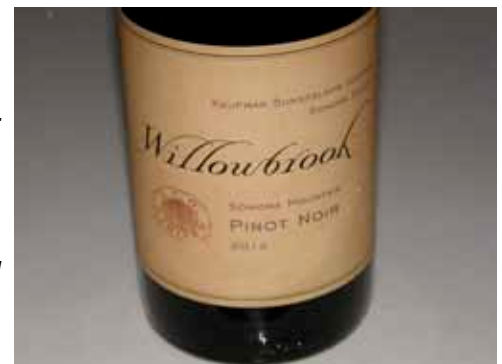


## **Willowbrook Cellars (JCO Limited Wines), Russian River Valley**

This winery was launched by winemaker Joe Otos in 2001 who was only 26-years-old at the time. A tasting room is located in the Hudson Street Wineries complex in Healdsburg. Visit [www.willowbrookcellars.com](http://www.willowbrookcellars.com).

**2012 Willowbrook Estate Grown Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., \$42. From a 3-acre vineyard located in the southwestern corner of the Russian River Valley. A mix of Dijon and Pommard clones and Swan and Calera selections. *Light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of red cherry, cranberry, sandalwood and rose petal rise from the glass. Light and elegant, with a charge of cherry fruit on the attack and finish. Silky in the mouth with a whisper of smoky oak in the background. Demure but satisfying.* **89.**

**2012 Willowbrook Kaufmann Sunnyslope Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., \$42. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Very pleasant array of scents including Bing cherry, black raspberry coulis and conifer. Light to mid weight flavors of black cherry, plum and cassis. Soft and caressing on the palate with impressive mid palate presence and finishing length. Forward drinking with modest tannins and well integrated acidity. Still very appealing the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **92.**



## **Wonderment, Napa Valley**

Owner and winemaker Stephanie Cook has a colorful career background resumé including international fashion model, a culinary degree, and owner of a successful catering company. She always harbored the secret dream of becoming a winemaker and finally pursued this end when she began working at Robert Biale Vineyards. In 2011, she crafted her first Pinot Noir and Zinfandel wines. In 2012, she honed her skills at Spottswoode, spent 2013 at Anomaly Vineyards, and in 2014



worked 2 months as a winemaker at Spy Valley Wines in Marlborough. Visit the website at [www.wondermentwines.com](http://www.wondermentwines.com).

**2012 Wonderment Campbell's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 15.3% alc., pH 3.66, 232 cases, \$40. Campbell's Vineyard is a Dutton Ranch property first planted in the mid 1990s. This 14-acre vineyard lies in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley and is planted to Pommard 4 and 777 clones. This wine is 100% Pommard 4. *Moderately dark black cherry color in the glass. Initially, the aromas of Bing cherry, cola, and clove are appealing. Over time, the fruit trends to display a roasted quality. Full-bodied core of very ripe black cherry, black raspberry, cola and baking spice flavors with a hint of complimentary oak. Vigorous and deep on the palate with balanced tannins. Well-crafted in this very ripe style.* **89.**

**2012 Wonderment Dr. Stan's Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.61, 23 cases, \$50 (sold out). From a vineyard of less than 1 acre of 30+ year-old Pinot Noir vines planted to Dijon 115. *Moderate ruby color in the glass. Oak-kissed cherry perfume leads to a mid weight earthy wine featuring flavors of cherry, dried herbs, cola and noticeable oak overlay. Well-structured with dry tannins and enough acidity to bring the fruit to life. The wine finishes with a modicum of juicy cherry fruit. When tasted later in the day from a previously opened and re-corked wine, the oak was more integrated and the wine was noticeably more pleasing.* **90.**



## More

**2012 Beaux Frères The Beaux Frères Vineyard Ribbon Ridge Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$90. 100% estate vineyard Pommard and Wädenswil clones on their own roots. 23-acre vineyard planted with tight spacing from 1987 to 1991 (average vine age 22 years). Biodynamically farmed. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very sexy aromas of fresh cherry pie glaze, exotic spices, ripe raspberries, sous-bois and sweet oak, becoming more exuberant over time in the glass. Intense mid palate attack of ripe cherry and black raspberry fruits with a whisper of oak in the background. Elegant and harmonious with juicy acidity and a grand finish. A very young wine with excellent long term prospects.* **92-93.**



**2012 Bryter Estates Tre Sette Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 15.1% alc., 110 cases, \$68. "Tre Sette" means "Three Sevens" in Italian and refers to the single clone of 777 used in making this wine. Gap's Crown Vineyard is in proximity to the Petaluma Gap. Planted in 2002 and 2005, the soils are clay loam with significant rock. 30% whole cluster fermented. Aged 14 months in 90% neutral French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately deep red cherry color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of Bing cherry, spice and sandalwood. Mid weight plus core of spiced cherry fruit with hints of anise, mocha and red berries. Plenty of sappy fruit, yet light on its feet. Flavors are not over ripe and nicely framed by complimentary oak. Finishes with a burst of cherry goodness.* **91.**

**2012 Conarium Madeline's Cuvée Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.60, 100 cases, \$35. Harvest Brix 25°. A barrel selection of various vineyard origins. 25% whole cluster fermentation, crushed by foot before a 7-day cold soak. Aged sur lie for 16 months in French oak

barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Lively aromas of black cherry, sous-bois and toasty oak. Discreetly weighted and quite flavorful, with tastes of black cherry, olliberry, and oak that attack with purpose, but fade a bit on the finish. The tannins are nicely balanced and the mouth feel is very silky.* **89.**

**2012 Dutton Estate Karmen Isabella-Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.55, 1805 cases, \$40. Dutton Ranch farms over 80 unique vineyards in the cooler areas of the Russian River Valley, primarily in the Green Valley AVA. This wine resulted from a selection of 3 favorite vineyards (Thomas Road, Marty's and Manzana) representing the Duttons' vision of a signature Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Clones "828," 777 and 115 planted in Goldridge soil. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, three punch downs daily, aged 10 months in 33% new French oak barrels. The final blend is a barrel selection of reserve quality. Winemaker is Terry Adams. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Bright perfume of fresh Bing cherries, raspberries and toasty oak. Upon entry, the wine fills the mouth with pure cherry pleasure and hints of cola and oak spice. A sophisticated offering that is forward and easy to like, with supple tannins, vibrancy, a silky mouth feel, and a luscious cherry-themed finish.* **93.**



**2013 Ken Wright Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., \$45. Vines planted in Willakenzie soil in 1989. *Moderately light cherry color in the glass. Perfumed with scents of cherry, raspberry, dusty earth and underbrush. Light in weight, even a bit shallow, with flavors of red cherry, cranberry and red raspberry with a hint of spice. A delicate wine with soft tannins and a short, somewhat empty finish. Could pick up intensity and interest over time but the wine was unchanged two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **87.**



**2013 Sante Arcangeli Split Rail Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.59, 370 cases, \$36. This vineyard is located at 1,700 feet elevation on a Corralitos mountaintop. Clones include Martini, Wädenswil, Mt. Eden, Swan, 32 and Pommard 4. Harvest Brix 22.5°-24.5°. 100% de-stemmed, aged sur lie with battonage for 10 months in 95% French and 5% Hungarian oak barrels of which 30% were new and 70% were used. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light cherry color in the glass. Lovely nose with alluring aromas of Bing cherry, sandalwood and spice cabinet. A delightful wine that is deep on the palate with an impressive attack of fleshy dark cherry, black raspberry and spice flavors complimented by a subtle vein of savory herbs in the background. The fine-grain, slightly weighty tannins provide good structure, and the persistent finish brings waves of vivid, flamboyant fruit.* **94.**



### **2012 Screen Door Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

14% alc., 100 cases, \$N/A. Inaugural vintage from winemakers Bobby and Shannon Donnell. *Moderate dark cherry color in the glass. The nose is really inviting, bursting with aromas of ripe Bing cherries, strawberries, sarsaparilla and spice. The wine is very giving with plenty of deep cherry flavor accented with a hint of cola. Very luscious, yet nimble, with modest tannins and deft balance. Quintessential Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. 93.*



### **2012 Soliste Barrique 9 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**



12.9% alc., 23 cases, \$100. Single vineyard, single clone, one barrel. From the Forêt bottling's vineyard, this barrel stood out. Hand bottled into unique Burgundy bottles, then hand waxed. *Moderately light red cherry color in the glass. Plenty to like about this wine with hi-tone aromas of cherry, spice box, sous-bois and buttery oak. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry and strawberry with elegance to spare. Seamless and demure with supple tannins and harmonious acidity. Very Chambolle-Musigny in character with a charming delicacy that seduces rather than imposes its will. This wine will be fascinating to follow over the ensuing years. 93-94.*



**2013 Sonoma-Loeb Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.59, \$39. Winemaker Phillip Corallo-Titus uses Pinot Noir clones 667, 777 and 115 to produce this wine. Harvest Brix 25.6°-26.8°. Wild yeast and proprietary Burgundian strains were used in the fermentation. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The elevating aromas of spiced black raspberry and black cherry are very inviting. A bold expression of Pinot Noir with luscious flavors of black raspberry, black cherry, spice, mocha and coffee-scented oak. Very satisfying with a notably intense finish and admirable balance. 91.*

**2013 Trader Joe's Grand Reserve Lot #23 Carneros Pinot Noir** 14% alc., \$13. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of black cherry, strawberry glaze and toasty oak. Light to mid weight flavors of juicy cherry with a hint of anise and cola. A bit shallow on the attack but finishes with a burst of cherry flavor backed by slightly astringent tannins. This wine delivers what you would expect for Pinot Noir at this price point. 86.*



**2013 Turtle Vines Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alcohol, pH 3.79, TA 0.58, 30 cases, \$34. 80% Pommard, 20% 667. Harvest Brix 24°. 5-day cold soak, 100% de-stemmed, not crushed. 5% whole cluster fermentation. Aged in Flex tanks with 20% French oak. *Moderate light cherry color in the glass. Aromas of red cherry, spice, and Herbs de Provence. Light in weight, but flavorful, with a good mid palate attack of cherry and raspberry fruits complimented by a hint of oak. Light on its feet and easy to cozy up to, with a refreshing cut of acidity on the finish. 88-89.*

**2012 Twomey Cellars Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 142 cases, \$68. The first single vineyard wine from this estate vineyard. For years, this vineyard has been the backbone for the Anderson Valley bottling. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of strawberry, cherry, spice box and smoky oak become more effusive over time. Juicy flavors of black cherry and ripe strawberry with a hint of spice are easy to like. Appealing finesse and harmony, with fine tannins, refreshing acidity and a bright finish. 91.*

# Sips of Recently Tasted White Wines

## Gloria Ferrer

The four sparkling wines represent the core of the Gloria Ferrer portfolio. All are crafted using *methodé champenoise*.

**2012 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.68, \$25. Barrel fermented in French oak. *Moderately light gold straw color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of lemon-lime, Asian pear and Fuji apple with a hint of tropical fruits and toasty oak. Solid, with a good grip of acidity on the juicy finish. 88.*



**NV Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Blancs Carneros Sparkling Wine** 12.5% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.75, dosage 13.3 g/L, \$22. Exclusively Chardonnay. Whole cluster pressed, fermented in stainless steel, proprietary yeast for secondary fermentation in bottle. Final blend contains 6 different base wines. 2015 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition Sweepstakes Award for sparkling wines. Aged 16 months en tirage before disgorgement. *Pale straw yellow color with a fine bead in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh apple and pear. The flavors of green apple, pear, Meyer lemon and white peach are satisfyingly bright. Slightly creamy on the palate, with a crisp, dry, mineral-imbued, soprano finish. 90.*



**NV Gloria Ferrer Sonoma Brut Carneros Sparkling Wine** 12.5% alc., pH 3.21, TA 0.68, dosage 13 g/L, \$22. This wine is dominated by Pinot Noir with added Chardonnay. Whole cluster pressed, 20% to 25% of first press used, proprietary yeast drive the second fermentation. A blend of 20 different base wines fermented in stainless steel. The wine spent 18 months en tirage. *Very pale pink diamond color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black cherry, Granny Smith apple and croissant. Vivid and lively on the palate with flavors of cherry, cranberry and citrus fruits. Completely dry, with inviting fruit goodness and length on the upbeat finish. 90.*



**NV Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Noirs Carneros Sparkling Wine** 12.2% alc., pH 3.07, TA 0.73, \$22.

Predominantly Pinot Noir (92%) with a small amount of Chardonnay (8%) and a small addition of Vin Gris blended into the base cuvée. Many different clones and selections. Whole cluster pressed, proprietary yeast used for secondary fermentation. The wine is a blend of 18 different base wines fermented in stainless steel. 5% to 7% cold-soaked Pinot Noir juice (Vin Gris) is blended into the base wine for color and texture. The wine was aged en tirage for 18 months.

*Light salmon color in the glass. Inviting aromas and flavors of strawberry, cherry and red currant. Plenty of fruit intensity and zip to satisfy, with a creamy mouth feel and a tight, dry, mouthwatering finish. 91.*



**NV Gloria Ferrer VA DE VI Carneros Sparkling Wine** 12.0% alc., pH 3.30, TA 0.75, dosage 25 G/L, \$22. A blend of Pinot Noir (89%) and Chardonnay (8%) with a trace of Muscat (3%). Whole cluster pressed with use of 20% to 25% of the first press. Proprietary yeast used for the secondary bottle fermentation. Fermented in stainless steel tanks. Aged 18 months en tirage. *Pale pink salmon color*

*in the glass. Shy aromas of apple, peach and lemongrass. Slightly sweet on the palate with juicy flavors of peach, berries and tropical fruits. The Muscat definitely peaks out. 88.*

**2013 Big Table Farm Wirtz Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Gris** 11.2% alc., 145 cases, \$32. This is an orange wine that defies description. This white grape was left on its skins to add color and texture to the wine, then pressed and fermented to dryness in neutral French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Light copper salmon color in the glass. The aromas are primarily floral including gardenia while the flavors are fruity including poached pear and hints of strawberry, cherry and vanilla. Lighter in weight, soft in texture and easy to drink. Should be chilled and paired with shellfish. 87.*

**2013 Briceland Vineyards Humboldt County Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., \$26. No oak or malolactic fermentation. *Moderately light golden straw color in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, apple tart and mountain air. Driven by crisp and steely acidity, this wine features flavors of lemon and yellow apple. Slightly viscous in the mouth with a juicy finish. Fine, but doesn't hold my interest over time. Tasted twice. 87.*

**2013 Briceland Vineyards Spirit Canyon Vineyard Mendocino County Arneis** 13.6% alc., \$21. An unusual California bottling of a white Italian grape known as "white Nebbiolo." Planted by Glenn McGourty. Less than 100 acres in California. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Shy aromas of lemon tart and wildflowers. Pleasant and smooth on the palate with flavors of lemon, dried herbs and floral note. With its lip-smacking acidity, this wine is a good foil for shellfish. Not as good as previous vintages of this wine. 88.*

**2012 Press Cellars Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 15.3% alc., 100 cases, \$38. Partial whole cluster with native yeast fermentation. Aged 10 months in 50% new American oak and 50% neutral French oak. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Bold aromas of lemon-lime and toasted oak. A bit unusual in flavor, with notes of cut apple, poached pear, grilled pineapple, toast and burnt toffee. Creamy in the mouth, with noticeable fruit ripeness and fullness, made for the California palate. 86.*

**2011 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 1,692 cases, \$60. *Light golden straw color in the glass. Appealing array of aromas including white peach, Asian pear, lychee, buttery oak, chalk and flint. Tight, with good tension, offering defined flavors of lemon, poached pear and very subtle oak. Beautifully configured and sophisticated with impeccable balance and a refreshing cut of acidity. A connoisseur's wine with many nuances made in a French style that will benefit from more time in bottle. 93.*



**2012 Smith-Madrone Spring Mountain District Napa Valley Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., 779 cases, pH 3.32, TA 0.69, 779 cases, \$32. Average age of dry-farmed vines is 39 years. 100% barrel fermented in 100% new French oak barrels for 8 months. Winemakers and winegrowers Charles and Stuart Smith. *Bright golden straw color and clear in the glass. Scents of lemon curd, poached pears and green apples lead to a soft and creamy core of citrus, pear and banana flavors with a hint of smoky oak and iron-driven minerality. Somewhat reserved in a French style that is well-crafted. 91.*



**2013 Smith-Madrone Spring Mountain District Napa Valley Riesling** 12.6% alc., 1,288 cases, \$27. From 5.5 acres of dry-farmed estate grapes. Cool mountain temperatures, rocky volcanic soil. *Inviting scents of lemon-lime, pine, grass and petrol. Juicy lemon-lime, green apple, pear and tropical flavors in a crisp style with a slightly creamy textural tone. Impressive finishing length and palate-cleansing acidity. A perfect match with oysters or southern fried chicken.* **93.**



**2013 Sonoma-Loeb Envoy Carneros Chardonnay** 14.9% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.64, \$38. Sourced from low-yielding Wente, Hyde and Robert Young clone fruit from the best blocks at Sangiacomo Vineyard. Harvest Brix 23.5°-24.9°. Barrel fermented, 100% malolactic fermentation, aged 8 months sur lie. *Light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Welcoming scents of lemon curd, buttery brioche, peach and chalk dust. Delicious and decadent with waves of citrus fruits including pineapple and lemon, with notes of Asian pear, nectarine, buttery popcorn, and toast. A take no prisoners, barrel fermented charmer made in an opulent and well oaked California style.* **90.**



**2013 Truchard Carneros Napa Valley Chardonnay**

14.1% alc., 4,955 cases, pH 3.34, TA 0.66, \$30. Harvest Brix 24.0°. Vines range from 17 to 39-years-old and benefit from the various marine soils, gently sloped terrain and cooler temperatures. Whole cluster pressed, 100% barrel fermented sur lie with battonage in 100% French oak, 33% of which was new for 10 months. 30%

malolactic fermentation. *Very light golden straw color and clear in the glass. Pleasant aromas of lemon curd, pear, apple pan dowdy and apple blossom. Light and refined on the palate and very refreshing, with lemon, pear, apple and nutty toffee flavors backed by bright acidity. The wine picks up flavor intensity and interest over time in the glass, offering a finishing kick of lemon-driven acidity. I continue to be very impressed by the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from this iconic Carneros winery.* **92.**



# Pinot Briefs

**DtC Shipments of Pinot Noir Increase** According to *Wines & Vines* (January 2015), direct-to-consumer (DtC) yearly sales reached \$1.8 billion for the year (November 2013 - November 2014), which was 16% higher than the year before. Consumers spent the most dollars on wines priced between \$30 and \$59.99 a bottle, but wines priced even higher were close behind. Within the \$30 to \$59.99 segment, Pinot Noir had the largest share by value, followed by Cabernet Sauvignon and red blends. Cabernet Sauvignon was the best-selling DtC varietal overall. Chardonnay was still the best-selling varietal in the marketplace with the highest off-premise sales of any varietal, capturing 20% share of the market by value and volume.

**Oregon Showed Most Growth Outside of California in 2014** According to *Wines & Vines* (December 2014), Oregon had the most new wineries outside of California in 2014 at 78, mostly in the Northern Willamette Valley. California's Napa County had 84 new wineries, the most of any wine region in the United States. Napa has 1,042 wineries, the highest total overall, accounting for almost a third of the 3,803 wineries in California. Sonoma County, with 783, has the second highest total. 69 new wineries opened in Sonoma County in 2014.

**IPNC Celebrates Historic Anniversary in 2015** Fifty years ago, David Lett planted the first Pinot Noir vine in the Willamette Valley. This year's International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC) is toasting 50 years of growing Pinot Noir in Oregon's Willamette Valley. The event will begin at the Grand Seminar, where you will learn how Pinot Noir is made. Taste a Champagne flight of three single-varietal bottlings crafted from Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay. Experience a "dosage trial" and understand how this step transforms texture, balance, and the final expression of the wine. Finally, raise a glass filled with a surprise wine, only to be unveiled at the IPNC. Imbibe plenty of Pinot Noir as winemakers conduct engaging seminars as part of the "University of Pinot," and frolic at the alfresco tastings and sumptuous meals throughout the weekend. Visit [www.ipnc.org](http://www.ipnc.org) to confirm your place at the celebration.



**New Majority Ownership at Kosta Browne** Kosta Browne Winery has new financial partners, J.W. Childs Associates, with the founders remaining co-owners. The Vincraft Group joined Kosta Browne (originally founded in 1997) as investment partners in 2009, followed by the building of a new winery at The Barlow in Sebastopol, and Kosta Browne's first vineyard acquisition in 2013, with the purchase of 20 acres of Keefer Ranch Vineyard. The new partnership also includes the CIRQ Estate Pinot Noir brand, crafted by winemaker Michael Browne from two hand-picked estates in the Russian River Valley. John Childs of J.W. Childs Associates has been a majority investor in the CIRQ Estate.

**Audio Series on Burgundy** Three years in the making, this nearly 10-hour, 7-part audio series examines every important aspect of Burgundy. Narrated by Allen Meadows, the Burghound, this audio program was created for all wine lovers, from the casual enthusiast to the seasoned pro. It contains in-depth coverage of world-famous communes and terroirs and advice on world class producers, vineyards and vintages. Visit [www.burghound.com/burgundy-essentials-audio-series](http://www.burghound.com/burgundy-essentials-audio-series). Priced at \$79.95

**10th Annual Pigs & Pinot Weekend** If you are not on the mailing list and did not know that tickets went on sale recently (January 13 for Visa pre-sale and January 14), you missed out on this event held at the Hotel Healdsburg. You may have missed out anyway, because this celebration is so popular that tickets sell out within 15 minutes. You can join a waiting list at [www.pigsandpinot.com](http://www.pigsandpinot.com). A special commemorative Pinot Noir bottling was offered in 1.5L and 3.0L formats. This exclusive wine blends Pinot Noir wine from twelve iconic Sonoma County Pigs & Pinot Gala winemakers including winners of the coveted Pinot Cup that have participated over the last decade. Only one barrel made. As of January 17, the wine was still available on the website.



**Climate Change Predicts Changes in Wine Production and Taste** 2014 was the world's warmest year on record and was the warmest vintage on record in California and Oregon, beating out 2013, the next warmest. A press release from BigGreen.co.uk, a company that is a leading expert in recycling and waste disposal for businesses, discussed what people have called a "grape-ocalypse." Some are predicting that many traditional winegrowing areas will be lost in as little as 35 years as the prime winegrowing regions move northward. However, even as global warming leads to larger yields and changes in taste of wines, winegrowers are adapting to insure timely and quality harvests. Alcohol levels are likely to rise, as one Australian writer put it, "Wines are bolder tasting....and pack a boozier wallop." British Columbia is one northerly region that is being touted as having considerable upside in the future and may prove to be an important source of Pinot Noir, the grape that loves warm sites in cool areas.



**Kistler Vineyards Finally Opens Arms to Consumers** Beginning in the early 1980s, I became a buyer of Kistler Chardonnays primarily because my spouse adored those wines. Despite buying a few cases of the wine a year (it was more affordable back then), there was no opportunity to visit the winery or taste the wines, or even meet the principals. Beginning last summer, Kistler reached out to their consumer base through their Director of Hospitality, Brooke Barnett, and invited them to visit. Early this year, the original barn at Trenton Roadhouse Vineyard will be converted into a small winemaking facility, with additional space among the barrels for wine tasting and limited dining. The goal is to harvest the best sections of the Trenton Roadhouse Vineyard, and to barrel ferment and age the wine in the barn, offering guests the opportunity to see the process firsthand while enjoying a glass of Chardonnay. Kistler offered multiple Chardonnays in the 2012 vintage including a Sonoma Coast blend, a Sonoma Mountains blend, Dutton Vineyard, Kistler Vineyard, Trenton Roadhouse Vineyard (some magnums in 2012), Vine Hill Vineyard, Hyde Vineyard, Hudson Vineyard, Durell Vineyard, Stone Flat Vineyard, and a special Cuvée Cathleen bottling. 2012 Pinot Noirs include a Sonoma Coast blend, Occidental Station Cuvée Catherine, Kistler Vineyard, and Silver Belt Vineyard. Two Pinot Noirs are offered under the Occidental label: Occidental Wines Bodega Highlands Cuvée Elizabeth and Occidental Wines SWK Vineyard. Kistler wines are sold through a mailing list with allocations based on the time on the list and past buying history. Visit [www.kistlervineyards.com](http://www.kistlervineyards.com) to join the mailing list or schedule a visit and tasting (\$75 for four wines, \$150 for seven wines) in Forestville at the Trenton Roadhouse Vineyard barn.

**2015 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition Award Winners** The largest competition of American wines in the world recently announced their award winners. 59 professional judges tasted over 6,417 entries in early January. Many of the award-winning wines will be available for tasting at the Public Tasting, held on February 14, 2015, at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. The **Red Wine Sweepstakes Award** was a tie between 2012 Sonoma-Cutrer Founders Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$65) and 2012 Pezzi King Estate Row 14 Reserve Dry Creek Zinfandel (\$50). **Best of Class Pinot Noir Awards:** Pinot Noir up to \$19.99 - 2013 Cameron Hughes Wine Monterey County Pinot Noir, 2013 Mirassou Sun California Pinot Noir (tie); Pinot Noir \$20 to \$24.99 - 2012 CRU Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir; Pinot Noir \$25 to \$29.99 - 2012 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Pinot Noir; Pinot Noir \$30 to \$34.99 - 2012 CRU Richard's Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir, 2012 Anaba Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (tie); Pinot Noir \$35 to \$39.99 - 2011 Teac Mor Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir; Pinot Noir \$40 to \$49.99 - 2013 McIntyre Vineyards McIntyre Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir, 2011 Storrs Winery and Vineyards Christie Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir (tie); Pinot Noir \$50 and over - 2012 Kenneth Volk Vineyards Steiner Creek Vineyard San Luis Obispo County Pinot Noir. For all medal winners, visit [www.winejudging.com](http://www.winejudging.com).

**2015 New Hampshire Wine Week** The New Hampshire Liquor Commission is putting on a week long wine event, January 26-February 1, that includes educational seminars, extensive tasting of multiple varietals, gourmet food and more. New to the event this year is a "Mini Pinot Noir Camp" on January 28, featuring some of Oregon's top winemakers. Four Oregon Pinot Noir focused wineries will gather for an exclusive seminar and special dinner including Lange Estate Winery and Vineyards, Adelsheim Vineyard, Firesteed Cellars, and Erath Winery. The week-long event will include the 12th Annual Easter Seals Winter Wine Spectacular featuring over 1,300 wines with winemakers from all over the world, including noted Pinot Noir specialists J Vineyard, Steele Wines, Rodney Strong Vineyards and Davis Bynum Wineries, Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards, Peter Paul Wines, R. Stuart & Co. Winery, and Robert Sinskey Vineyards.

**Winemaker Bob Cabral Joins Three Sticks Wines in Sonoma** Bill Price, owner of Price Family Vineyards, Classic Wines, LLC, and Three Sticks Wines, announced that Bob Cabral, formerly the winemaker at Williams Selyem, will be partnering with his team at Three Sticks Wines as Director of Winemaking. Ryan Prichard, one-time harvest intern for Cabral and former assistant winemaker

for Medlock Ames, will join the team as associate winemaker. The new team will work alongside winemaker Don Van Staaveren as he moves to the title of Winemaker Emeritus and continues to craft the Three Sticks Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Blanc and Castenada Wines. Cabral said he has longed to work with grapes from Durell and Gap's Crown vineyards. The new winemakers will blend and bottle the 2013 vintage in the coming weeks. Visit the Three Sticks website to find out more about Cabral, and join the mailing list at [www.threestickswines.com](http://www.threestickswines.com).

**Winter Wine Escapes** Winter is a surprisingly good time to visit California wine country. Hotel rates are lower, winemakers are more available, roads and wineries are less crowded, and there are many notable events. Examples include: Lodi Wine and Chocolate Weekend (February 7-8), 37th Annual Barrel Tasting Weekend, Northern Sonoma County (March 6-8 and March 13-15), Livermore Valley's 7th Annual Barrel Tasting Weekend (March 21-22), 4th Annual Winter Wine Classic, Santa Barbara County (January 24), 10th Annual Wine Fantasy, Santa Barbara County (February 13-16), World of Pinot Noir (March 6-7). For more information, visit [www.discovercaliforniawines.com](http://www.discovercaliforniawines.com). A number of events are held in the Willamette Valley of Oregon as well: Heart of Willamette's 5th Annual Barrel Tour (February 7), Sip McMinnville Wine & Food Classic (March 13-15), Oregon Chardonnay Symposium (March 14). For a full listing, visit [www.willamettewines.com/events/](http://www.willamettewines.com/events/).

**50 Years - Pressing On** Willamette Valley Wineries Association is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Winegrowing in the Willamette Valley on February 21, 2015. The wine tasting will be held at Pure Space, an urban venue in the Pearl in Portland. The event will feature an unparalleled tasting of library wines, food by Art of Catering, live music, historic photo displays, and an enormous family portrait. Tickets are \$150 per person until February 10, 2015, at Eventbrite.

**Santa Lucia Highlands Artisans Annual Gala** SLH Gala IX on May 16 will feature more than thirty Santa Lucia Highlands labels pouring their wines. Tickets go on sale in early February and sell out quickly. Visit the Santa Lucia Highlands Artisans website at [www.santaluciahighlands.com](http://www.santaluciahighlands.com).



**Report on Williams Selyem Charity Auction Dinner** Blake Brown sent me a report on a charity auction item from this year's Central Coast Wine Classic. The lot, which included many of Burt Williams' Williams Selyem wines from 1984 to 1997, and a dinner for 10 at the San Ysidro Ranch, raised \$16,000. The event took place on December 3, 2014. Some of the top wines of the night

included a 1995 Williams Selyem Allen Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay in magnum, a 1985 and 1991 Williams Selyem Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, and a 1996 Williams Selyem Precious Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir. Blake said, "This was one of the finest wine experiences I have ever had. The combination of the friends who attended, the ambiance, food, service and especially the wines were as good as it gets and to know charities benefited from the pleasures we all shared made it even more special. Photo below shows Burt in his signature Hawaiian shirt and Blake at the event.



**Petaluma Gap Proposed AVA Presentation and Tasting** An evening of information on the Petaluma Gap wine region and its proposed AVA, and a tasting of Petaluma Gap wines will be offered at the Healdsburg Public Library on Friday, January 30 from 7:00 PM, to 9:00 PM. Tickets may be purchased online at Eventbrite: [www.eventbrite.com/e/petaluma-gap-birth-of-an-ava-tickets-14883116803?aff=es2&rank=6](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/petaluma-gap-birth-of-an-ava-tickets-14883116803?aff=es2&rank=6).

**Pinots I Wish I Had Tried in 2015** There were a number of Pinots released in 2014 that I didn't get a chance to sample for several reasons. Here is a list of ones that drew considerable praise among wine critics:

### California

- 2012 Donum 1870 Carneros Pinot Noir
- 2012 Donum West Slope Carneros Pinot Noir
- 2012 Bevan Cellars Summit 1376' Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
- 2012 Bevan Cellars Summit 2114' Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
- 2012 Boar's View Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
- 2012 Brewer-Clifton Machado Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir
- 2012 Loring Aubaine Vineyard San Luis Obispo County Pinot Noir
- 2012 Peter Michael Le Caprice Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir

2012 Roar Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir  
2012 Foxen Block 43 Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Paul Hobbs Hyde Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir  
2012 Joseph Phelps Quarter Moon Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir  
2012 FEL Spiritus Anderson Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 The Hilt The Old Guard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir  
2012 Banshee Wines Sullivan Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir

## Oregon

2012 Brick House Evelyn's Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Bergström Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Brittan Basalt Block McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Brittan Gestalt Block McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 The Eyrie Vineyard Original Vines Reserve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Patton Valley Lorna-Marie Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Cornerstone Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Brooks Janus Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Winderlea Dundee Hills Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 ROCO Clawson Creek Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 J. Christopher Sandra Adele Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Chapter 24 Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Chapter 24 Hyland Vineyard McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Chehalem Mountains Ridgecrest Vineyards Wind Ridge Block Ribbon Ridge Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Harper Voit Bieze Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Hyland Vineyards McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Domaine Serene Evenstad Reserve Dundee Willamette Valley Hills Pinot Noir  
2012 Archery Summit Archer's Edge Estate Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Torii Mor Olson Vineyard Old Vine Reserve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Boedecker Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Adelsheim Quarter Mile Lane Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Adelsheim Ribbon Springs Vineyard Ribbon Ridge Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Aubichon Armstrong Vineyard Ribbon Ridge Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Elk Cove Mt. Richmond Old Vines Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Evening Land Seven Springs Vineyard La Source Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir  
2012 Stoller Helen's Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir

**New Look for the *PinotFile*** After 12 years, and close to 350 issues, I felt it was long overdue to refresh the *Prince of Pinot/PinotFile* Home Page and make a few other changes on the website. Same content, better organization. With the assistance of Wendy Coy (Coy Design in Sebastopol), Peter Rowell (my long time website techie who retired last year), and Michael McDonald (my new website techie), we have transformed and modernized the Home Page. Look for the changes soon. For the half million visitors to the website over the past year, I say thanks for your interest. I especially want to thank those who sent me thank-you's, compliments and suggestions. Feed back is very important to me. W.S. Merwin wrote in *Opening the Hand*, "I asked how can you ever be sure that what you write is really any good at all and he said you can't, you can never be sure." Feed back motivates me to try harder to enhance your Pinot Noir drinking experience.