



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

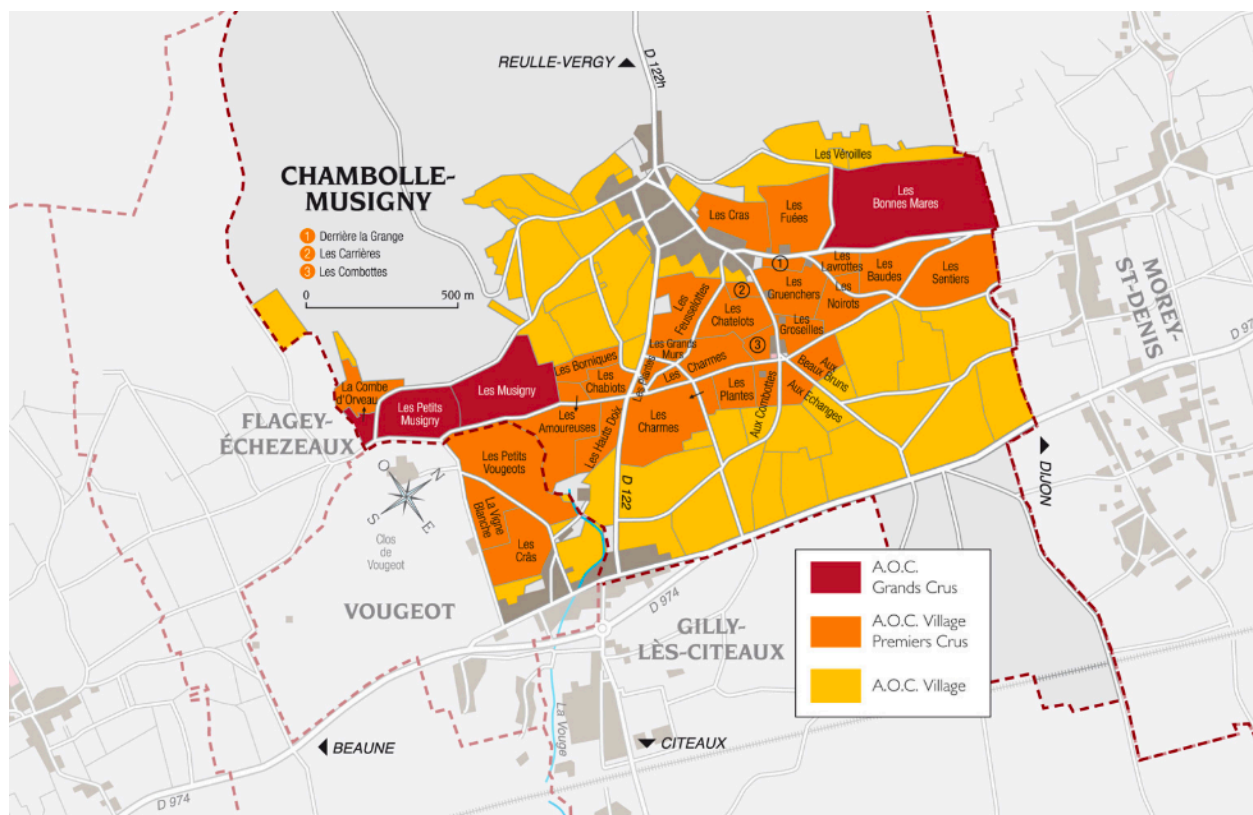
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If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir

Romancing with Les Amoureuses

A feature on Burgundy? The Holidays are a slow time for wineries to ship wine for review so I thought I would tap into my cellar for some wines that might interest pinotphiles. As you realize, the *PinotFile* is devoted to domestic Pinot Noir, but I have drank and cellared red Burgundy through the years. Although this experience gives me some reference, red Burgundy is a completely different wine than domestic Pinot Noir. It is also outrageously expensive and led me to quit buying red Burgundy for the most part after the 2005 vintage.

Referencing Clive Coates MW in *The Wines of Burgundy*, Remington Norman in *The Great Domaines of Burgundy*, and Steen Öhman at winehog.com, I have sourced some information about the climate, Les Amoureuses.



Les Amoureuses is a 5.40 hectare (13 acres) Premier Cru vineyard in the commune and appellation of Chambolle-Musigny in Côte de Nuits. One of 25 climats in Chambolle-Musigny, it is considered the best of the Premier Cru vineyards. The two Grand Cru climats in Chambolle-Musigny are Bonnes Mares and Le Musigny, but many wine experts consider Les Amoureuses the equivalent of a Grand Cru. It certainly commands the prices of a Grand Cru.

The name, "Les Amoureuses," is thought to be derived from a place where young lovers would go to embrace, although Jasper Morris suggests that because the soil thickens in the rain and sticks to your boots, the soil clings like young lovers. The latter is a less likely explanation since many vineyards in Burgundy show this

clings like young lovers. The latter is a less likely explanation since many vineyards in Burgundy show this characteristic.

Les Amoureuses is situated downslope and adjacent (north of) to Le Musigny (see map above). The soil of Les Amoureuses is similar in style to Le Musigny but is shallower than the lower sections of Le Musigny above.

Some have labeled Les Amoureuses as the “younger brother to Musigny,” claiming that Les Amoureuses lacks the power and depth of Le Musigny. Wine writers emphasize the wines of Les Amoureuses reveal finesse rather than power or weight. Steen Öhman said, “Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses is the delight of Burgundy....filigree, sensual, cool and refined. The female pendant to Musigny with the same type of regal mineralogy - yet more delicate and light footed - without the sheer power and depth of the might Musigny. Les Amoureuses has a delicacy and sensuality not found in Musigny and is perhaps the most delicate wine of Burgundy.”

The alluring descriptions of Les Amoureuses led me to purchase a number of bottles over the years. That said, the description of Les Amoureuses as delicate and feminine may be an oversimplification based on my recent tasting of several examples. Depending on the producer and the vintage, I found some wines quite powerful and concentrated. I also found large differences among the various producers indicating that winemaking approaches vary noticeably.

Les Amoureuses, like red Burgundy in general, is a much more savory wine than domestic Pinot Noir. The most impressive feature for me of the wines reviewed here was the intensity and length of finish on almost all of these bottles. I did not score the wines, preferring to use a one word descriptive of quality. I believe my palate is so “domesticated,” with a preference for freshness and fruitiness, that perhaps I don’t appreciate these wines like a Burgundy aficionado would. I think domestic Pinot Noir offers more consistency of quality. Some wines were downright disappointing considering they cost well over \$100 a bottle several years ago.

Among the vigneronns whose wines were reviewed here, Groffier, with over 1 hectare, is the largest owner.

The Les Amoureuses wines are labeled either Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru (1er Cru) Les Amoureuses, or Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru in which case the wine may be blended from several Premier Cru vineyards within the ACC. In some cases, the vineyard is simply designated as Amoureuses.

All wines were acquired upon release and perfectly cellared at 55°. I have included current prices (shocking) from auction or retailers on wine-searcher.com.

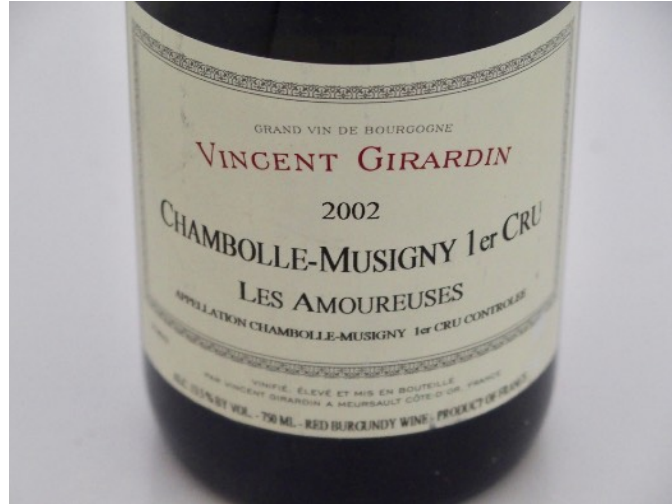
1996 Louis Jadot Chambolle Musigny Les Amoureuses 1er Cru 13.5% alc.. \$837 (current price) Imported by Kobrand, NY, NY. *Moderately dark garnet color with the slightest bricking of the rim. Aromas of burnt cigar, old leather and old trunk initially. Fruit aromas of black cherry and pomegranate show up later. Intense, mid weight flavors of black cherry, blueberry, pomegranate and herbal oak. Impressive attack and finishing persistence. Welcome underlying acidity but still retaining aggressive tannins that leave a bit of astringency on the finish.* Drink up. **Good**

1999 Domaine B. Serveau et fils Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru Les Amoureuses 13.0% alc.. \$492 (current price) Imported by Village Wine Imports Ltd., NY, NY. *Moderate garnet color in the glass with slight rim bricking. Match stick aromas initially that resolve over time but fruit never surfaces on the nose. Mid weight flavors of purple and black fruits with a sulfuric thread in the background. There is significant char and smoke tones that mimic a smoke-tainted wine (? Brett). The tannins stick out a bit on the finish.* Drink up. **N/R**

2002 Joseph Drouhin Chambolle-Musigny Amoureuses 13.0% alc.. \$560 (current price) Imported by Wine Brokers International, Incline Village, Nevada for a private collection. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of cherry and toast arrive over time. Rather delicate in style, with a tasty core of fresh dark red berry and black cherry fruit accented with subtle spice and oak. Very long in the mouth and on the finish with compatible tannins in the background. I was impressed by the seeming youth and freshness of this 16-year-old wine, yet the nose lacked virility. The finish went on and on. I can really get into a wine like this.* Drink now-2025. **Exceptional**

2002 Vincent Girardin Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru Les Amoureuses 13.5% alc.. Imported by Vineyard Brands, Inc., Birmingham, Alabama. *Dark garnet color in the glass. I have extensive notes on this wine. Engaging aromas of black cherry, Asian spices, undergrowth, rose petal, toasty oak and charcoal grill. Broad-*

shouldered and powerful, with mid weight plus flavors of blackberry, cassis, and dark chocolate. There is a noticeable savory and earthy side to this wine as well. Highly flavorful and beautifully balanced with a creamy mouth feel, although the finishing length did not quite match up to several other wines in this review session. That said, this was a highly nuanced wine that showed the more gutsy side of this vineyard. Drink now-2025.
Exceptional



2002 Robert Groffier Père & Fils Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru “Les Amoureuses” 13.5% alc.. \$250-\$450 (current auction price). Imported by Atherton Wine Imports, CA. *Moderating garnet color in the glass with slight rim bricking. Perfumed with aromas of black cherry, tobacco, piquant spices, green bean and toast. Discreetly concentrated flavor of earth-kissed black fruits with a slight feral and vegetal underpinning. Juicy and expansive in the mouth, with merged tannins and admirable balance. Drink now to 2022. Very Good*



2002 Frédéric Magnien Premier Cru Chambolle-Musigny Amoureuses 13.5% alc.. \$431 (current price). Imported by Premier Cru, Emeryville, CA. Unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Complex nose offering scents of black cherry, dried herbs, earthy flora, and floral bouquet increasing in grandeur over time in the glass. Mid weight plus in concentration, with an intense attack of boysenberry, blackberry and cassis fruit flavors and subtle citrus, earth and green herbal threads in the background. Silky in the mouth, with merged tannins and a very lengthy finish. Drink now to 2022. Very Good*

2003 Lucien Le Moine Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru “Les Amoureuses” 13.5% alc.. Imported by Atherton Wine Imports, San Jose, CA. Unfined and unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Very ripe but not over ripe fruit aromas and flavors predominate. The nose offers scents of black cherry, blackberry, prune, spice, dried rose petal, mulch and char. Mid weight plus in concentration with flavors that echo the aromas. Sappy in attack, length and finish with a sleek texture and compatible backing tannins. Delicious in a fruit-driven Caliesque style with plenty of sweet fruit that is not tiring and pumps out goodness over a considerable length of time. Drink now to 2023. Exceptional*



2004 Domaine Louis Jadot Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses 13.5% alc., \$135 (purchase price and current price). Imported by Kobrand Corp, NY, NY. *Moderate garnet color with slight rim bricking. Funky, even over time, with aromas of old cork, dank cellar, old leather, toast and a hint of Bing cherry. Slightly sulfured at first but disappearing over time, revealing the delicate flavor of chocolate imbued cherry with savory and char notes. Silky in texture, with restrained tannins and some length on the finish. Good acid drive, even leading to a slightly tart finish. The wine just doesn't deliver enough charm. Drink up. **Good***

2004 Francois Bertheau Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru Les Amoureuses 13.5% alc.. \$378 (current price). Imported by Kermit Lynch, Wine Merchant, Berkeley, CA. *Moderate light garnet color with slight rim bricking. Pleasant aromas of cherry, dried rose petal and spice. Very delicate and elegant in style with a lively acid underbelly, offering flavors of redder fruits and complimentary oak overlay. The wine finishes with a tart cherry persistence. This wines shows the finesse side of this vineyard. Drink now to 2024. **Very Good***

2004 Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses Premier Cru 13.5% alc.. \$478-\$616 (current price). Imported by I & B Imports Chicago, IL. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Gorgeous nose over time offering aromas of sous-bois, spice and cherry. Redder fruited in a mid weight style with impressive length in the mouth and an extended finish. Silky and sexy, with add flavors of iron, baking spices and savory herbs. This beauty is struck through with earth and mineralogy. Drink now through 2030. **Exceptional** (Note - I recently tasted all five Vogüé wines from the 2004 vintage - but that's for another feature)*



2005 Domaine Lucien Le Moine Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru “Les Amoureuses” 13.5% alc.. \$373-\$582 (current price). Imported by Scott Paul Selections, Portland, OR. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Persistent aromas of black cherry, sous-bois, rose, vanilla and toast satisfy and maintain over time in the glass. An array of black fruits are composed in a mid weight style with underlain savory oak highlights. Not as giving as the 2003 vintage by this producer and less sappy, but still sporting a very long finish. More underlying acidity and tannic backbone in this vintage. Much better when re-tasted later in the day. Drink now to 2030. Very Good*

2005 Domaine B. Serveau et fils Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru Les Amoureuses 12.5% alc.. \$130 (purchase price), \$180 (average current price). Imported by Esquin Imports Inc., San Francisco, CA. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of black cherry, dried herbs and a hint of iodine. There was a suggestion of Brett upon opening. Elegant styled with a middleweight core of black cherry fruit. The silky texture is the wine’s best feature. A woody thread plies the background and the tannins arise on the quenching finish that is not particularly long and a bit tart. Drink now to 2025. Good*

2006 Domaine G. Roumier Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru Amoureuses 13.5% alc.. \$1027 (current auction price). Imported by Diegeo Chateau & Estate Wines, NY, NY. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of red cherry, cranberry, tobacco, spice and sandalwood. Light to mid weight styled with very appealing flavors of fresh red cherry and red and purple berry. Suave in texture with a healthy tannic backbone and a long, but not extremely long finish. This wine may need more time to integrate the tannins and oak. Drink now to 2026. Very Good+*

2008 Joseph Drouhin Premier Cru Chambolle-Musigny Amoureuses 13.0% alc.. \$382-\$449 (current price). Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co, NY, NY. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of baked cherry, fruit compote, cardamom spice, oak and stem lead off. Light to mid weight styled with well-ripened cherry and cranberry flavors along with accents of vanilla, toast and spice. Inviting charm and balance with sinewy tannins and a remarkable finish that saturates the aromatic memory for a minute or two. Drink now to 2030. Exceptional*



Quick Trigger: Are Reviews Done Too Soon?

Pinot Noir from California and Oregon producers is often sent for review shortly after bottling. There is an urgency to get the newest vintage ratings in the marketplace. Wine critics often tell consumers to wait a year or two or more because they predict that the wine will improve in bottle. Unfortunately, once a wine is reviewed early in its life, the score is a permanent tattoo that the wine must carry for many years.

I decided to look at Pinot Noir wines I had previously reviewed and compare to my reviews and scores approximately 16-26 months later. I had this unique opportunity available to me since producers often send two bottles of each wine and I tucked the second bottle away in my temperature controlled wine locker. This is a modest sampling, but can provide valuable insight. On my second reviews, I did not look at the original reviews or scores to bias me. Bottle variation can come into play here but let's disregard that minor confounder. As far as I know, no wine critic has ever undertaken this type of study.

The approximate time between reviews follows the wine's title. Two of the second wines I chose to review were corked and not included - this is why wineries often send two bottles for review. I only chose wines that I thought received scores of 90 or above on initial review.

2013 Alma Fria Holtermann Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 26 months *Earth-kissed aromas including black cherry, peppery spices, pine forest and savory herbs. A generous gulp of beautifully ripened black cherry and black raspberry fruits entice the palate. Mid weight plus in style, with suave tannins, a compliment of oak, and a very long finish. 94 - previously 90*



2013 Bailiwick Silver Pines Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 26 months *Leading off are aromas of blackest cherry and toasty oak. Elegant and relatively light in weight, with a juicy cherry core back by complimentary smoky oak. Very suave and refined and easy to drink. 90 - previously 90*

2013 LaRue Emmaline Ann Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 26 months *Very pleasant aromas of red berry, rose petal, burnt tobacco, spice and Herbs d' Provence. Light in weight but imposing black cherry and raspberry flavors with a hint of tobacco and spice. Excellent harmony with a very generous and lengthy finish. Definitely some whole cluster input but integrated. 93 - previously 90*

2013 Lucienne Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 26 months *The barrel treatment is evident on the nose that also offers pleasing aromas of dark red and black fruits. The middleweight core of black cherry and blackberry fruits has a significant oak overlay evident as toast and tobacco. The fruit core is delicious and the silky, soft tannins make for smooth drinking, but the oak is intrusive and has become more evident over time in bottle. 89 - previously 91*

2013 Winderlea Legacy Dundee Hills Pinot Noir 26 months *Aromas of cherry, spice and earthy flora lead to a lighter weighted concentrate of cheerful cherry flavor in a crisp, elegant styled wine with gentle tannins and*

2013 Winderlea Legacy Dundee Hills Pinot Noir 26 months *Aromas of cherry, spice and earthy flora lead to a lighter weighted concentrate of cheerful cherry flavor in a crisp, elegant styled wine with gentle tannins and juicy acidity. Nicely balanced and at its peak. 90 - previously 91*

2014 Domaine De La Côte Bloom's Field Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 24 months *Aromas of cherry, raspberry, burnt tobacco, rose petal and fertile earth. Nicely balanced with good vibrancy, featuring a bright cherry core framed by suave, silky tannins. A little tobacco and floral input. Elegant and lacy, with a burst of cherry goodness on the bright finishing. Fades slightly over time in the glass. 92 - previously 93*

2014 Sante Arcangeli Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 24 months *The oak-dominated nose does offer some cherry and spice aromas. The oak is better integrated on the palate in this mid weight styled wine displaying the essence of black cherries. The tannins are immersed, the oak adds a compliment, and the bright, lip-smacking finish is notable. 91 - previously 91*

2014 Westwood Annadel Gap Vineyard Heritage Clones Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir 24 months *The nose offers only aromas of earth, mulch and barrel and no fruit emerges even with extensive swirling. Much better on the palate, with mid weight plus very tasty flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and spice framed by integrated tannins and a thread of oak. The wine finishes with welcome generosity and juiciness. 92 - previously 90*

2014 Hibou Riddle Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 23 months *Wonderful expressive nose offering aromas of purple grape and berry, blooming rose, pine needle and earthy flora. Mid weight flavors of blackberry and black raspberry framed by imposing oak. Creamy in texture, with balanced tannins and some finishing intensity. Seems to be showing more oak than when reviewed originally. 92 - previously 96*

2013 Broadley Vineyards Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir 22 months *Inviting aromas of black cherry, violets and oak fade a bit over time in the glass. Light to mid weight flavors of black cherry and anise with noticeable tannins, a slick mouth feel and a decent but not exceptional finish. 89 - previous 91-92*

2013 En Garde Pleasant Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 21 months *Delicate aromas of muddled cherry, warm spices and brown sugar. Very suave in the mouth, with bright cherry and raspberry fruit flavors framed by cooperative tannins. The finish is noticeably long and satisfying. 92 - previously 93*

2014 Masút Estate Vineyard Eagle Peak Mendocino Pinot Noir 21 months *An assortment of well-ripened, even slightly stewed dark fruit aromas with hints of dusty earth and floral bouquet. Mid weight flavors of blackberry, black raspberry, pomegranate and black tea in harmony with well-structured tannins. 90 - previously 93*

2014 Siduri Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir (screw cap) 21 months *An impressive wine that really satisfies on the richly appointed palate. Aromas and flavors of ripe cherries and a hint of vanilla impress on the attack and extremely long finish. The fruit really has traction and there is a good grip of acidity to lift the fruit load. Still outstanding when tasted two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 94 - previously 94*



2014 Kitá Hilliard Bruce Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 20 months *The nose is very charming, offering hi-tone aromas of cherry, fragrant compost, mushroom, allspice and root beer. Impressive harmony and vibrancy, with the mid weight essence of perfectly ripened cherries complimented by a slight spice and bourbon note. Attention-getting on the attack and wonderful intensity and length on the finish. This wine has really picked up nuance and interest over time. 94 - previously 91*

2013 Asuncion Ridge Barrel Select San Luis Obispo County Pinot Noir 19 months *A robust reserve style wine with a highly aromatic nose of spiced dark berry aromas. Good marriage of mid weight plus purple and black fruits with tobacco oak. Gentle tannins and decent finish. Several more years of good drinking ahead. 93 - previously 91*

2014 Navarro Vineyards Deep End Blend Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 18 months *The aroma of dark crushed cherries is not penetrating but very pleasant and accented with some seasoned barrel. Generously concentrated black cherry fruit is accented with hints of spice and sassafras. The texture is velvety, the t n' a balance is spot on, and there is some finishing vigor. 93 - previously 90*

2014 Luminous Hills LUX Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir 18 months *Reserved, but pleasant aromas of black cherry and pomegranate. The theme is cherry goodness in this mid weight wine that shows seamless balance, a silky mouth feel and a long finish. A very giving and friendly wine at this point. 92 - previously 91*

2014 Seven of Hearts Special Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 18 months *Inviting perfume of black cherry, exotic spices and fertile earth. Light to mid weight in dark red and purple fruit concentrate. Noteworthy attack and length in the mouth, with engaging elegance, balanced tannins and a finish deserving of special reserve designation. 93 - previously 90-91*

2014 Balletto BCD Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 17 months *Soaring aromas of Bing cherry, baking spices, cardamom and a bit of oak. Velvety in the mouth, with a charge of fresh black cherry fruit accented with warm spices and a touch of toasty oak. Impeccably balanced, with a charitable finish. 93 - previously 92*

2012 Amalie Robert Amalie's Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 16 months *Aromas of cherry, leather and dry mulch lead to a middleweight styled wine with ingratiating flavors of red cherry and red berry. Nicely composed, with polish and balance and a deeply fruited finish. At its peak. 93 - previously 94*

2015 Loring Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 16 months *Charming aromas of iced red cherry and sandalwood. Light in weight and very elegant, with a core of red cherry and cranberry fruit flavors. Satisfying and easy going with very fine-grain tannins and some persistence on the finish. 91 - previously 90*

Conclusion: 6 wines were significantly better upon re-tasting, 5 wines were better upon re-tasting, 3 wines were the same upon re-tasting and 7 wines were worse upon re-tasting. In other words, about 50% were better and 50% were the same or worse when re-tasted 16-26 months after the initial review. The results are like marriage: you vow to love your spouse for better or worse, not knowing what is going to happen down the road.

Noted wine writer, Matt Kramer, approached the subject of aging wine in the latest issue of the *Wine Spectator*. His conclusion was, "Most mature wines aren't worth the wait. Exceptions exist." Certainly with domestic Pinot Noir, there are wineries with a track record of age ability (ie Cristom, Calera, Eyrie, Littorai, Hanzell) and you can feel confident in cellaring the wines from those producers, but the majority of domestic wines are ready to go upon release. I say carefully choose your domestic Pinot Noir wines, buy at least six bottles, and taste them over 1-7 years to see how they age. You can then decide if you like the freshness of youth or the maturity of older age and determine the aging potential of wines from different producers. The challenge is that Pinot Noir does not give up its charms at a predictable point in time and that can drive you crazy. They didn't anoint it the "heartbreak grape" for no reason!

Are wines released too soon after bottling? Almost certainly, but that is necessary for a winery's operating budget and not ideal. Although many winemakers would love to hold back their latest releases for a year or two before release, storing a few vintages before release is a costly commitment and the retail and restaurant market will not tolerate it.

Most believe it takes 6 to 9 months for a bottled wine to return to its barreled state although there are exceptions depending on the bottling process. After the shock of bottling, the wines are often sent to a storage facility, and then shook up when shipped. Most producers advise waiting a month or so after receiving shipped Pinot Noir before opening bottles. Other wines, like Chardonnay, seem to have no qualm about shipping and there is no need to wait. If you can spring for an expensive Coravin, you can get a peek before opening but I have found this of little value as Pinot Noir changes so much when poured and exposed to oxygen.

Failla's Ehren Jordan Establishes a Foothold in the Willamette Valley

Winemaker Ehren Jordan of Failla (Fay-la) Wines in California's Napa Valley has become Zenith Vineyard's winemaker for the 2018 vintage. Jordan launched Failla in 1998, taking the winery's name from the husband-and-wife team of Ehren and fellow debtor Anne-Marie Failla. The winery originally incorporated Jordan in the name but legal issues over the use of the word Jordan forced them to continue the label as simply "Failla." Failla is well known for cool climate vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Keefer Ranch, Occidental Ridge, Pearlessence Vineyard, Failla's estate vineyard on the Sonoma Coast and others. Failla Chardonnays are recommendable as well.

Jordan first stepped his toes into Oregon five vintages ago with grapes sourced from Seven Springs Vineyard. Gradually, Failla has increased production to 5,000 cases of Oregon Pinot Noir. In May, 2018, Failla Wines moved its Oregon operations to Zenith Vineyard in the Eola-Amity Hills.

In December 2017 Zenith Vineyard acquired the winery and tasting room that was established in 2008 by a partnership between Zenith Vineyard and St. Innocent Winery. St. Innocent's Mark Vlossak has been the Zenith Vineyard winemaker since the first vintage in 2006.

The 83-acre Zenith Vineyard was first planted in 1989 by Pat and Patti O'Connor but was owned most recently by Tim and Kari Ramey. The vineyard has been the source of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wine grapes for 20 winery clients and in 2017 16 wineries produced a Zenith Vineyard designated wine. The vineyard is LIVE certified and sustainably farmed.

For more information, visit www.zenithvineyard.com or www.faillawines.com.

2015 Failla Seven Springs Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$59. This wine was produced and bottled at Ehren Jordan Wine Cellars in St. Helena. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Fresh aromas of dark red cherry, rose petal, earthbound flora and brioche. Striking vibrancy and length in a mid weight styled wine with flavors of cherry, raspberry, spice and subtle oak. Rather delicate with gentle tannins. Impressively, the wine builds in intensity over time and was more demonstrative when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 93.*



Clarice by Winemaker Adam Lee

Winemaker Adam Lee of Siduri has launched a new winery, Clarice, named for and dedicated to his grandmother, Clarice Hosea Phears, who had a tremendous influence on the type of winemaker that Adam would become.

Adam grew up in Texas in the 1960s and 1970s and has fond memories of his grandmother, who was a vestige of a bygone era. She was born in 1898 and carried herself with a certain properness that was very different than how Adam's parents raised him.

Clarice lived much of her life on a farm. Her husband and Adam's grandfather, Pleasant Phears, was a dairy farmer for Carnation Dairy. Clarice was never sure when Pleasant was coming home each day, although it was rarely before sunset. Because of this uncertainty, she would often cook dinner slowly in a large pot, keeping the food warm until Pleasant made his way home. Although Clarice did not live on the farm when Adam came along, she often cooked dinners slowly in a crockpot for him and Adam fondly remembers those meals. She told Adam that the key to cooking in a crockpot was understanding that all the items added early in the process would marry together into one harmonious meal over time and anything added later would like stand out.

When Adam began to make wine many years later, he took Clarice's lesson to heart, realizing that wine, like food had a more harmonious outcome when adjustments or blending was done early in the process. Today, at Siduri, if any adjustments need to be made to a wine, Adam does it before fermentation rather than after and this practice has served him well.

Adam's approach to marrying ingredients early in the process to build harmony did not extend to his approach in the vineyard, where each section and clone was harvested separately. There were several good reasons for this, but primarily because it seemed to be the standard practice for premium Pinot Noir producers. Grapes are picked by section and by clone, only blending the different parts together later into one wine. Adam has followed this procedure for over twenty vintages.

Picking Blocks and or Clones Separately

I asked Theresa Heredia, the winemaker at Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery to comment on the common practice of picking blocks and or clones separately to produce Pinot Noir She gave me several reasons why this is preferred.

- Logistics often dictate. For example, tank size limits blending if combining the sections is too much for one tank. But if tonnage from one block or clone is small, I will blend them into one tank to take advantage of tank space.
- Evaluating blocks or clones separately is educational.
- The winemaker can choose the best blocks or clones at a later date after the grapes have fermented and aged.
- Different blocks or clones may ripen at different rates, either because of clonal differences, soil, pruning, disease or exposure, so it makes sense to pick separately. If blocks produce only small amounts, the winemaker may need to wait for all blocks to ripen and pick together. This may mean that one block or clone may get slightly riper, and make the pick decision when the other block is not quite as ripe (a ripeness average).
- The winemaker can separate the weak from the strong. For example, I would almost always keep Dijon clone 115 separate from heritage selections like Calera because the heritage selections make a more complete wine than Dijon clones in my opinion. Also, one of the clones may not make the cut in a final blending decision.
- Keeping blocks separate allows the winemaker to evaluate the quality of the different blocks from each grower, helping the winemaker to decide which grower to work with in the future.
- On the other hand, if I am working with Dijon clones, for example, sometimes I will blend small amounts of two to three clones to try to build complexity during fermentation. This is because sometimes the Dijon clones seem one dimensional on their own.
- If a block is planted to "selection massale," there is no choice but to wait until the entire block is ripe and pick it all together. Some grapes get riper and others are less ripe.

Over the past few years Adam has begun to look at things differently. A trip to Chateauneuf-du-Pape and his experience with old vine Zinfandel winemaking led him to re-examine his vineyards from the point of view of wines blended from the vines to the bottle. Adam began to develop a different vision as he walked the vineyards. Instead of looking at individual sections and clones of Pinot Noir, he began to look at the vineyard as one complete entity. This made the most sense with vineyards where he had a great deal of experience and where the vines had matured. It was from this new vision that Clarice Wine Company was born.

Adam selected two iconic vineyards for Clarice - Garys' Vineyard and Rosella's Vineyard. The Garys' Vineyard was first planted in 1997 and Adam began purchasing fruit from Garys' Vineyard in the initial 1999 vintage. The Rosella's Vineyard was planted in 1998 and 1999 and Adam began acquiring fruit from that vineyard in the initial 2001 vintage. Over the past fifteen plus years, some of the best Pinot Noir he has produced has come from these two vineyards. Moreover, the vineyards are farmed by his good friends, Mark Pisoni and Gary Franscioni.

Adam has selected two specific areas of vines from each of these vineyards, sensing that they will work particularly well together. He purchases grapes from both sites by the acre rather than by the ton. This allows him to work with Mark and Gary to determine farming and yield decisions. As the 2017 harvest approached, Adam walked and sampled the two sections of the Garys' Vineyard together as one site and did the same with the two acres of Rosella's Vineyard. The goal was to envision the site as a whole rather than being made up of different parts, and to then make the wines as one from beginning to end. Currently, no one in the Santa Lucia Highlands is following this approach.

In the initial 2017 vintage, the grapes were picked together from each site. The two acres of Garys' Vineyard fermented in the same tank, and the two acres of Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir similarly fermented. Indigenous yeast and indigenous malolactic bacteria were used for ferments.

Picking all grapes from a vineyard together and vinifying them in unison is innovative, but the idea behind Clarice Wine Company goes beyond picking and winemaking decisions. Adam has decided that selling wine is not what he likes to do. What he does enjoy is the friendships, camaraderie, and sharing of knowledge and experiences that wine engenders. Accordingly, he has created a completely new experience at odds with the common mailing list or wine club. He calls it the Clarice Family Program, and it is a way to join his extended wine family.

The Clarice Family Program is designed as a community of wine lovers that have a desire to share, experience, learn and geek out about everything related to wine. Subscribers will enjoy Clarice Pinot Noir but there are several other benefits.

The Clarice Wine Company website will host an exclusive 'Family Members Only' section. This section will have frequently updated content including a monthly article written by Adam and a monthly article written by someone else in the wine business. Members of the Program will be able to interact and ask questions. This Family Members Only section will also contain an Education Section with information on wine-related topics.

Clarice Family Members will receive an invitation to an annual Clarice Wine Party where growers will be special guests, and an invitation to an annual Non-Clarice Wine Party, featuring wines from a winemaker or grower friend, or from a vineyard or appellation that Adam admires.

Each month from March through August, subscribers will be billed around \$160. This makes buying wine directly from a winery easier on one's pocketbook, avoiding the many dreaded mailers that seem to all arrive in your inbox the same week in time. In early November, subscribers will receive a case of wine that includes four bottles of Clarice Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir, four bottles of Garys' Vineyard Pinot Noir and four bottles of Clarice Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Further details on Clarice Wine Company and to find out about the launch of this project are available at www.claricewinecompany.com.

Note: I included this announcement not to promote Adam's new innovative project, but in keeping with that project, I was interested in the educational aspect of the topic. Clarice Family Program is an expansion of consumer involvement and education and a sensible step in that direction. Also, I have always decried the fact that wineries send out their offerings in the spring and fall at the same time, making it a financial challenge on many consumers who are then forced to pick and choose. Spreading the financial commitment out over several months is an approach worth trying. When Adam sold Siduri (he is still the winemaker), he wanted to step back from the business side of wine and this new adventure allows him time to become more personally involved with his consumers and to do something completely different.

Adam Lee will be one of the featured winemakers at the upcoming World of Pinot Noir Friday Dinner No. 3, "101 Years of Single-Vineyard Pinot Noir Along the Historic Highway 101." Visit www.wopn.com.

Pinot Briefs

North Coast Wildfire Impact Study The Wine Business Institute (WBI) at Sonoma State University released preliminary findings of its wildfire impact study of the North Coast wine industry, based on a survey of more than 200 vineyard and winery stakeholders across Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties. While the wildfires were unprecedented in Northern California, the findings indicate the actual impact on the North Coast wine industry was localized and limited. The most significant impact on the North Coast wine industry was an immediate and temporary slowdown of visitors to the region. Presumably this was due to images and reports at the height of the disaster. 99.8% of vineyard acres in the North Coast region were unaffected by recent fires. 93% of wineries were reported as unaffected in terms of structural damage or long-term impact. 99.5% of the total crop value was recovered. Many survey respondents reported a drop in tasting room traffic and sales, with visitation from outside California and the U.S. was most affected. Beginning in November, visitor traffic and tasting room sales returned to near normal. Other wine regions in the state reported a significant increase in visitor numbers during this period. Over \$15 million in charitable contributions have been made through a local credit union and other channels in support of those directly impacted by the fires. For further information, visit www.sonoma.edu/winebiz.

New Lot 18 Wine Collection Lot 18, Broadway Video Enterprises and IFC unveiled a new wine collection inspired by the hit television series 'Portlandia.' The Oregon wines are based on some of the show's most memorable sketches. Each bottle is accompanied by a specially designed label. The wines, in limited production, went on sale January 18 and can be ordered exclusively at www.Lot18.com/Portlandia while supplies last. The lineup of four wines includes '2016 Women and Women First Willamette Valley Pinot Noir.'



SIP McMinnville Wine & Food Classic SIP is celebrating its Silver Anniversary of the McMinnville Wine & Food Classic, March 9-11, at the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum. The festival brings together about 170 small independent producers of Oregon wine, beer, liquor, food and art for three days of tasting, toasting, and raising funds for St. James Catholic School in McMinnville, founded in 1906. Attendees can order through a streamlined system, allowing them to pick up at a valet counter upon leaving the festival. Beginning February 1, day pass tickets are \$20 for adults and \$17 for seniors and designated drivers. After entry, patrons pay for each tasting or food item on an individual basis. For more details, visit www.sipclassic.org and to plan your time in the area, visit www.visitmcminnville.com/.

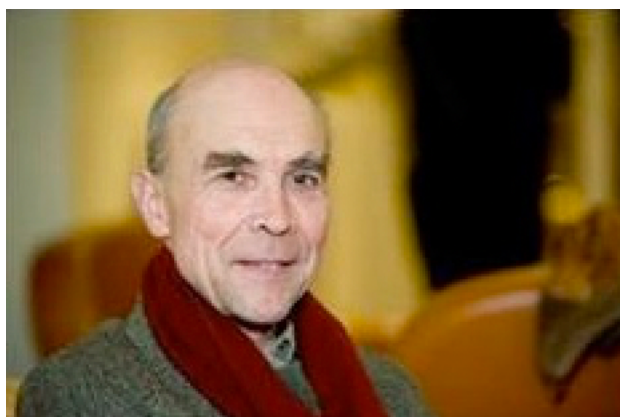
Le Paulée de San Francisco The La Paulée Burgundy Festival in San Francisco February 27-March 3, 2018, allows guests to sample current releases and older vintages from some of the most sought-after domaines of Burgundy. The wine service is led by over fifty of the nation's notable sommeliers. Tickets are now on sale including offers exclusively for American Express card members at www.lapaulee.com.

Setting the Record Straight A reader pointed out to me that many writers and references attribute the success of Oregon Pinot Noir to the fact that the Willamette Valley and Burgundy are at the same latitude. The truth is, they aren't! The Willamette Valley is at 45 degrees latitude, while Burgundy is at 47 degrees latitude including the Côte d'Or. 47 degrees in the United States would put you in Tacoma, Washington and 45 degrees in France would put you much closer to Bordeaux. Also, the 45th parallel runs through St. Paul, Minnesota and Ottawa, Canada (try growing Pinot Noir in either of those places). Another perpetuated myth has been debunked!

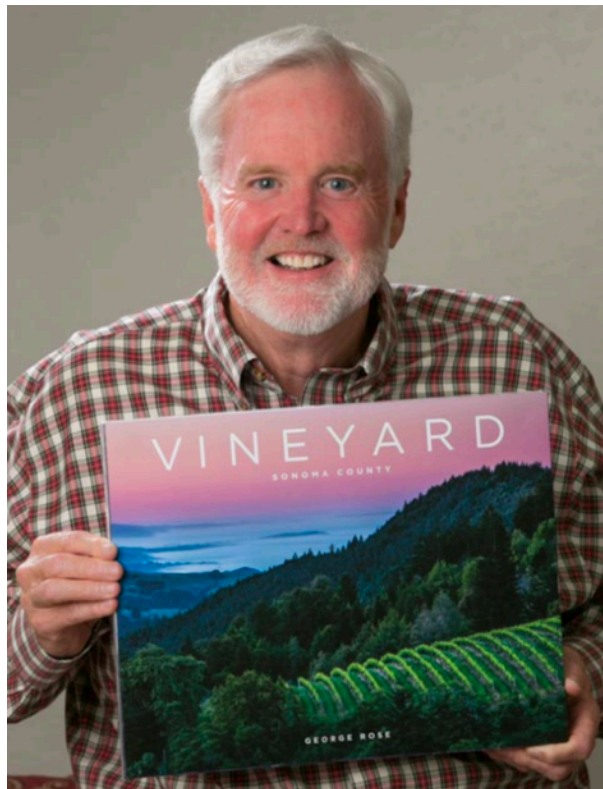
Golden Gate Wine Cellars Owner Frank Melis stocks very hard-to-get domestic Pinot Noir wines that are usually only available to winery mailing list customers. He is able to buy directly from the winery at wholesale prices and sell the wines at retail prices. Golden Gate Wine Cellars, started in June of 2005, specializes in boutique California wineries. Melis previously ran another high-end wine retail store in San Francisco for over a decade. He organizes weekly wine tastings, hosts winery owners and winemakers and every year conducts one large wine tasting out-of-state. His portfolio includes Pinot Noir wineries such as Paul Lato, Mail Road, (DuMOL - Melis was their first retail client), Cattleya, and Pisoni. You can also find wines from Colgin, Screaming Eagle, Harlan, Bench, Kamen, and Kongsgaard. Visit the website at www.goldengatewinecellars.com or contact Frank Melis directly if you are looking for something special at frank@ggwc.com.

Top Ten Wine Grape Varieties in the World Per and Britt Karlsson composed an article at www.forbes.com that breaks down the planted acreage of the most widely planted grape varieties. The most grown grape variety for wine is Cabernet Sauvignon (840,000 acres). Number two is Merlot, three is Tempranillo, four is Airén (a white grape used in Spain for unpretentious wines), five is Chardonnay, six is Syrah, seven is Grenache Noir, eight is Sauvignon Blanc, nine is Pinot Noir (285,000 acres), and ten is Trebbiano Toscano/Ugni Blanc.

DRC's Aubert de Villaine Thinks 2015 Most Remarkable Vintage of His Career de Villaine spoke to *the drinks business* at <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2018/01/de-villaine-2015-is-the-most-remarkable-vintage-of-my-career/>. He said, "I have never seen a season where the vineyards were so beautiful from beginning to end." He went on to say in reference to the wines, "They have a serenity and peacefulness about them that was a reflection of the well-being of the vineyards." This is a remarkable statement considering de Villaine has participated in over fifty vintages. DRC used 100% whole cluster in 2015, only employed recently in 2005 and 2009. DRC has always used some whole cluster in fermentations, but the portion used in this manner must have high maturity and ripening to ensure the stems don't transmit a stalky character to the wines. Yields in 2015 for every DRC bottling were smaller than in 2014. The smaller harvest and superiority of the vintage has led to a rise in prices between 17%-31% depending on the bottling.



New Book: 'VINEYARD: Sonoma County' George Rose is a well-known wine photography based in Sonoma County. In this book, he shows the diversity and personality of vineyards through photographs he has accumulated in over 25 years exploring Sonoma County. The last photograph in the book is of Paradise Ridge and its beloved LOVE sculpture at sunset, before the October wildfires. This sculpture survived the fire and has become a symbol of Santa Rosa's community coming together in the recovery process. The book (\$80) is available at www.georgerose.com. Some of the profits of the sale of the book will be donated to the Sonoma County Grape Grower Foundation to support vineyard workers who were displaced by the fires.

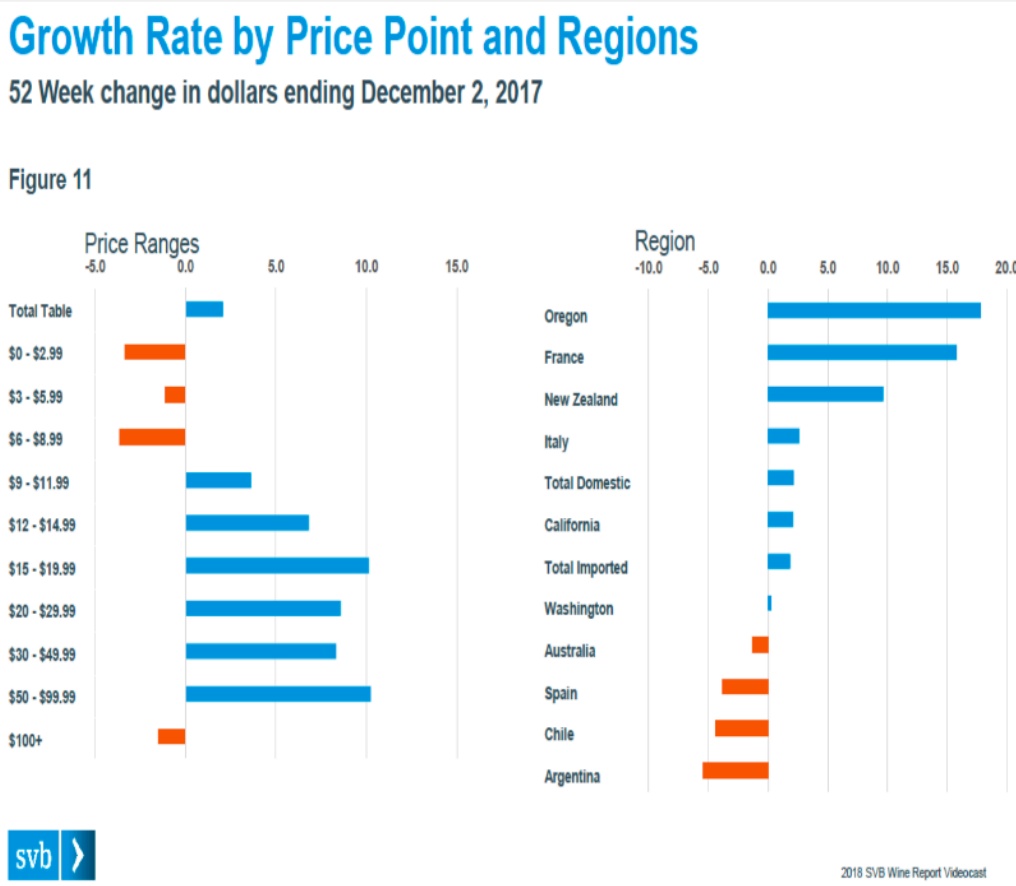


MIT Biochemical Engineer May Save Pinot Noir from Warming Climate Change

At Massachusetts Institute of Technology, biochemical engineer Jean-Francois Hamel has discovered the secrets to how natural yeasts affect flavors and alcohol levels in wine and in turn may save wine grapes from the damaging effects of climate warming. An article written by Elon McCoy appeared in Bloomberg Pursuits, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-23/winemakers-turn-to-mit-to-save-pinot-noir-in-warming-temperatures>. Hamel, a Frenchman, was enlisted by Oregon Chapter 24 winery owner Mark Tarlov and its winemaker Louis Michel Liger-Belair to try to figure out how indigenous yeasts in their vineyards could make elegant and complex wines even with increasingly warm temperatures. The results of Hamel's research have been bottled and the winery's first single-vineyard Pinot Noir wines will be available beginning February 1 (\$120 a bottle). Chapter 24 has found that each of their vineyard sites has its own mix of wild yeasts that contribute to the terroir of the vineyard. The primary yeast for winemaking, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* acts on grape sugars and produces high levels of alcohol. It competes with the weaker non-*Saccharomyces* types and together they produce many different flavors and aromas. The non-*Saccharomyces* types tend to produce less alcohol. Both yeast types need oxygen to thrive. For the 2016 vintage, Chapter 24 used hand-sprayed aerobic pump overs at the beginning of fermentation to provide additional oxygen and allow non-*Saccharomyces* yeasts to survive longer. The result is that the 2016 Chapter 24 Pinot Noir wines had the same alcohol as wines from the previous vintage, even though the weather during the 2016 growing season was much hotter. The results suggest the possibility of producing Pinot Noir with lower alcohol levels and higher acidity without turning to de-alcoholization. Hamel is directing further research into determining how much oxygen is ideal during fermentation and how to precisely add it to control a wine's eventual alcohol level. Four Chapter 24 Pinot Noir wines grown in volcanic soils are being released to winery by allocation: 2016 Warden Hill (\$120), 2016 Hopewell Hills (\$120), 2016 Highland (\$180) and 2016 Stone Creek (\$180). The winery is located in Salem, Oregon, and is open only by appointment. Visit www.chapter24vineyards.com.

Smoke Taint in Aftermath of California Wildfires An article was posted by Jessica Zimmer at <http://www.spiritedbiz.com/clearing-air-smoke-taint-aftermath-california-wildfires/>. Winery owners who were interviewed in Napa reported that the fires will have minimal effect on future wine quality. Most grapes were already harvested prior to the Northern California fires because 2017 was a relatively warm year. Michael Haney, interim executive director for Sonoma County Vintners said, "The idea that smoke taint affected this year's harvest has been inflated."

Growth Rate of Wine by Price Point and Regions in 2017



Benovia Winery's Customers, Friends & Family Donate nearly \$400,000 to Sonoma County Fire Relief Funds Benovia Winery is a small production, family-owned winery in the heart of the Russian River Valley owned by husband-and-wife co-founders Mary Dewane and Joe Anderson and winemaker Mike Sullivan. When the devastating fires broke out in October, friends of Benovia pitched in immediately to offer financial assistance. Benovia pledged \$100,000 in matching funds and when donations totaling \$199,000 poured in from friends of the winery across the country, Benovia's \$100,000 matching donation was quickly realized. Additionally, Benovia waived toasting room fees from October 24 - December 31 and donated another \$15,000 to the benefactors, the Redwood Credit Union North Bay Fire Relief Fund, the Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation's Wildlife Housing Support Fund, and the Sonoma County Community Foundation Resilience Fund. (Sullivan delivering donations in photo below)

