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The FIRST Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

Time to Buy Burgundy 2002

The much acclaimed 2002 white and red Burgundies are showing up on retail shelves and if you like Burgundy, it is the time to buy. The 2002 vintage is consistently excellent from top producers at the Bourgogne and Village levels on up. The 1999 Burgundies have vanished. The 2000 vintage wines are decent, will drink well early, and some are still available. The 2001 vintage is more reticent and will need years to unravel. There are some good buys on the 2000 and 2001 vintages relative to 2002, but overall, despite the higher prices, the 2002 Burgundies will provide a better return on your money if you avoid the glamour grand cru vineyards and producers.

The success of the 2003 and 2004 Burgundies is uncertain. 2003 was a very hot growing season in Burgundy. The August 13 *ban de vendange* in the Saone-et-Loire was the earliest ever recorded anywhere in Burgundy. The result is rich, tannic reds with lowered acidity. The 2003 crop is small. 2004 has been a growing season of concern. Some areas have suffered with rain, cold, and hail. Torrential rains, baseball-sized hailstones, and very cold temperatures interrupted a warm summer leading up to August. Insiders tell me that 2004 could be a disaster for many vineyards.

It is time to stock up on 2002 lower level appellations and village level wines. In general, the wines are better the farther north in the Cote d'Or you go, with Vosne-Romanee, Chambolle Musigny, Morey-St-Denis, and Gevrey-Chambertin leading the way.

Producers to look for include: Arnoux, Bachelet, Barthod-Noellet, Bouchard, Cathiard, Chevillon, d'Angerville, Dugat-Py, Fourrier, Geantet-Ponsiot, Gouges, Hudelot-Noellat, Lefarge, Lignier, Meo-Cazumet, Mommessin, Mortet, Pierrot-Minot, Potel, Rion, Roty, and Rouget.



Pinot Noir is a finicky grape that likes to play hard to get.

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"I find the vintage remarkably consistent with the caveat that Burgundy is notoriously inconsistent. It's equally good for red and white, and equally good from Macon in the south to Chablis in the north, and from humble generic Bourgogne to grand cru. I think it's the most consistent vintage since 1990."

Charles Taylor, Charles Taylor Wines

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Victoria and Tasmania Go Head to Head

Victoria produces Australia's most expensive Pinot Noir in the Bass Phillip 2001 Reserve Pinot Noir at \$220 a bottle. But last year, a tiny Tasmanian winery made it big in Pinot Noir. Panorama Vineyard, south of Hobart, put a hefty price tag of \$160 on its 2001 Reserve Pinot Noir. The battle was launched and the press went wild in Australia. Panorama winemaker Michael Vishacki became instantly famous and the entire 1000-bottle production was sold within days. Sensing an opportunity, fellow Pinot Noir producers Domaine A and Moorilla Estate released reserve wines priced at about \$100.

Tasmania producers pay a healthy \$2000 a ton for Pinot Noir fruit and Tasmania is now one of the few Australian states that can sell as much Pinot Noir as it grows. Tasmania has an advantage over Victoria in that it has a single geographical indication covering the entire state. In Victoria, each region— Geelong, Macedon, Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula, wants to establish its own Pinot identity. The result is that they fight each other for supremacy and market their wines separately. Other Pinot-growing regions in Australia including Canberra, Orange, Queensland, and Western Australia's Pemberton region have miniscule production at present.

Victoria Pinot Noir superstars include Bannockburn, Bass Phillips, Bindi, Yabby lane, Stonier, Yering Station, Diamond Valley Vineyards, and TarraWarra Estate. Middle-market brands are TarraWarra Tin Crows, Moorooduc Estate, Dromana Estate, Kooyong, and Scotchmans Hill. 2003 crop: 2280 tons.

Tasmania top-quality superstars are Domaine A, Pipers Brook, Freycinet, and Apsley Gorge. The middle-market brands are Moorilla Estate, Wellington, Stefano Lubiana, Meadowbank, Panorama, and Dairymple. 2003 crop: 1464 tons.

The fight to produce and sell top-quality Pinot Noirs in Australia and the world is one between Victoria and Tasmania and at this stage, Tasmania may have a slight lead.

20 \$20 Go To 02 Pinots

You need some solid Pinot Noir performers for daily drinking and when extended family shows up for dinner. You know, when your brother-in-law arrives for dinner and you want to serve something decent, but not extravagant, since it won't be appreciated. Your brother-in-law has never spoken the word Pinot except when he gets up from the couch after a few beers, heads for the bathroom, and exclaims "I have to go pi-now." This list includes Pinot Noirs you can go to and know that they will be very decent and even receive a few accolades.

2002 Acacia Carneros Pinot Noir (\$20)
2002 J Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$18)
2002 Goldeneye Migration Pinot Noir (\$23)
2002 Babcock Tri-Counties Pinot Noir (\$18)
2002 Broadley Reserve Pinot Noir (\$23)
2002 Saintsbury Carneros Pinot Noir (\$20)
2002 Orogeny Pinot Noir (\$22)
2002 Paige 23 Pinot Noir (\$18)
2002 David Bruce Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$22)
2002 La Crema Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$20)

2002 Navarro Mendocino Pinot Noir (\$17)
2002 Navarro L'Ancienne Pinot Noir (\$20)
2002 Chehalem 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$20)
2002 Chalone Pinot Noir (\$20)
2002 Roessler Bluejay Pinot Noir (\$25)
2002 Davis Family RRV Pinot Noir (\$25)
2002 Patricia Green Estate Pinot Noir (\$23)
2002 WH Smith Sonoma Coast (\$20)
2002 Hitching Post Santa Barbara (\$20)
2002 Hartford Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$20)



Recent Releases From Pisoni-Garys'-Rosella's

2002 Pisoni Estate Pinot Noir Only 382 cases produced. Low rainfall in 2002 stressed the vines. Own-rooted vines yielded 1.25 tons to an acre. Sold in 3 bottle wood box. Sold out at the winery. Pisonivineyards.com

2002 Roar Garys' Vineyard and 2002 Roar Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noirs. The Roar wines are produced by Gary and Rosella Francscioni. The Garys' (302 cases) and the Pisoni (89 cases) were sold out at the winery. A 2003 Rosella's vineyard and Santa Lucia Highlands bottling will be released 03/05. You must get on the mailing list to obtain any future releases. Retail distribution is very limited. Try HiTime (hitimewine.net).

2002 Lucia Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir This wine is a 50/50 blend of Garys' and Pisoni declassified fruit. Available at Wine Exchange (winex.com) for \$30.

2002 August West Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir August West wines are the product of a partnership between Gary Francscioni (who owns Rosella's Vineyard), Howard Graham (Russian River Valley Pinot Noir grower), and Ed Kurtzman. This wine has been out a couple of months. A killer with plenty of Pinot fruit and a nice cinnamon overlay. I really liked this juice. More fun than GameBoy. 176 cases. \$45 at HiTime (hitimewine.net).

2002 Peter Michael "Le Moulin Rouge" Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noir \$70. This wine stylistically has tended toward a big, rich oaky style. Very limited allocation to mailing list buyers. Petermichaelwinery.com.

2002 Miner Garys' Vineyard Pinot Noir, 969 cases, and **2002 Miner Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir**, 300 cases, both \$50. Miner is located in Napa and probably better known for their Cabernets and Chardonnays, but they have a deft hand with Pinot Noir and their releases have been well-reviewed. Minerwines.com

Also look for other excellent producers who craft a Pisoni Vineyard, Garys' Vineyard, or Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir including: Arcadian (see Vol 3, Issue 3), Bernardus, Loring, Miner, Morgan, Pelerin, Siduri, and Testarossa. Be forewarned that wines from Pisoni Vineyard particularly tend to be ultrarich, dense, and highly-extracted, often leaning toward Syrah in style and taste. Wines from the other two vineyards seem to have less octane and are equally sought after. The Rosella's Vineyard has scored more points in the major wine journals than any other Santa Lucia Highlands property.

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Lookout for Lookout Ridge

In 1988 Gordon Holmes bought a remote piece of property high up on the western ridge of the Mayacamas Mountains. Even though he was a successful publisher of financial magazines, his dream was to start a vineyard and winery. In 1993 he moved his publishing company's New York operations to the town of Sonoma and started *Buyside* magazine. He eventually sold the magazine and concentrated on his dream. He enlisted the help of Greg Bjornstad and Greg La Follette, both of whom had an impressive background in winemaking. Bjornstad has consulted at Flowers, DuMol, Hirsch, Paul Hobbs, Peter Michael, Pisoni, and Scott Paul. LaFollette had his early training under Andre Tchelistcheff at Beaulieu vineyards and moved on to Hartford Court and Flowers. Bjornstad and La Follette have their own label also— Tandem. The assembled dream team is referred to as the "three G's".

Homes planted Cabernet and Syrah on his own vineyard but his **2001 Alta Coma Mendocino Sangiovese** (\$40) from purchased grapes won "Best in California Award" at the 2004 California State Fair. He also released a **2001 Sonoma Coast Keefer Ranch Pinot Noir**, \$45, (Keefer Vineyard is in the Green Valley appellation of western Sonoma County) that has been favorably reviewed in the wine press. Right now this is a tiny brand new winery but the potential is obvious.



The founder of WineRelease.com, Neil Monnens, will publish the wine industry's first ranking of wines based on critics' average scores and current retail prices. The monthly buying guide, *QPRwines* allows consumers to search for the best value at a given price point. Wine buyers can find out which wines are values and which wines aren't. The September 1st Issue of *QPRwines* ranks 2000 Bordeaux and is available free. It can be obtained from the website—www.QPRwines.com.

California is exporting more wine to Asia where there is a rising potential. Japan is the major buyer now, where the middle class is developing an interest in wine and wine is becoming hip, especially among woman drinkers. But China could be a huge market with a middle class bigger than the entire US population! The Chinese government is promoting wine's heart health benefits. There are, however, barriers to wine consumption in Asia, partly because wine is seen by many as aloof and intimidating, and because it is often associated with Italian and French cuisine. Japan has the largest number of accredited sommeliers after Italy, but they rarely suggest wines to customers and few are really able to explain what a wine really tastes like because they have not traveled widely or tasted extensively. Most of them are only textbook educated which limits their ability to encourage customers to experiment freely.

Steamboat Lodge Critical to Pinot Noir Renaissance

Merry Edwards has said that the formation of the Pinot Noir Technical Symposium (in conjunction with the International Pinot Noir Celebration) was the most important factor in improving Pinot Noir in America. This symposium was started in 1980 by a group of Oregon vintners who wanted to share their knowledge in a convivial and collegial fashion, and has been hosted every year since by Oregon winegrowers at the Steamboat Lodge in Oregon. At this fly-fishing retreat along the Umpqua River, they did do some fishing, but it was the discussions and tastings of Pinot Noir that led the Pinot Noir renaissance in America. No public and press were allowed so that press coverage was nonexistent and the work here went unnoticed except to those in the wine business. This Pinot Noir "brain trust" eventually included Californians, Burgundians, Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians all looking to improve the quality of their Pinot Noirs. This annual meeting leapfrogged Pinot Noir to the varietal war forefront ahead of Syrah and Merlot. Many of the current advances in vineyard practices, clonal selection, understanding microclimates, and winemaking techniques were advanced at Steamboat. This storied event was and remains unpublicized, but is a tremendously important contribution to the success of America's Pinot Noir growers and winemakers.

