

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

In Pinot
veritas

Good, Better, Brogan

I can remember the day very clearly. I was on my first trip to Sonoma. It was the early 90's and previously I had mainly visited high-profile Napa wineries like Mondavi, Beringer, and Chateau Montelena. I had become enamored with Williams Selyem Pinot Noirs and eagerly anticipated my winery visit. A tiny sign on the mail box directed my turn off Westside Road. I pulled up an unpaved driveway and parked next to a small nondescript shed-like building. The first person I met was Margaret Wierenga, Burt William's daughter. As we stood around the old stainless steel milk vats used for fermentation and talked Pinot, I realized for the first time that wineries are about people, not facilities.

Margaret (Margi) Wierenga worked for her father for several years where she became well-acquainted with his style and philosophy of winemaking. In 1998 she finally struck out on her own, starting Brogan Cellars. Like her father, she has sourced only top-quality vineyards for her wines including Summa Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast and Lone Redwood Ranch in the Russian River Valley. Although Burt Williams is prevented from consulting on her wines by the non-compete agreement signed with the sale of Williams Selyem in 1997, his influence is evident in her superb Pinot Noirs. One wine writer described her style as "a fist in a velvet glove". Burt Williams does currently have a ranch and vineyard in the Anderson Valley (Philo) which will be supplying fruit for a Brogan Cellars "My Father's Vineyard" bottling next year.

Brogan Cellars is developing a winery in Hopland, 30 miles north of Healdsburg on Hwy 101. Projected production will be 1,500 cases a year. The wines are highly allocated and available by mailing list only. Phone Margi at 707-744-8760, or better, e-mail her at brogancellar@saber.net.

2003 Brogan Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$45. 14.1% alc. This is the quintessential RRV Pinot Noir. Dark raspberry and cherry flavors with cola and dark spices adding to the graceful structure. Succulent.

2003 Brogan Cellars Summa Vineyard Young Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$55 14.5% alc. Amazingly complex and interesting. Dark, earthy and flush with impressive cherry and berry fruit. A young giant that needs a little cellaring.

2003 Brogan Cellars Lingensfelder Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$40 14.7% alc. The most intense of the trio. Impressively built with luscious fruit flavors. A well-oaked big boy.

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Brogan Cellars Pinot Noir was prominently consumed on the Ozzie Osbourne TV Show .

The 2001 Brogan Cellars RRV Pinot Noir won the Red Wine Sweepstakes Award at the Sonoma County Harvest Fair.

Brogan slogans include: 'Break Out the Brogan' and 'How Does Your Brogan Grow?'

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Film Pinot Noir

The Golden Globe Award Winning film, *Sideways*, has created quite an interest in Pinot Noir and Santa Barbara County. Fox Searchlight Pictures, along with the Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau, created a map outlining all of the wineries, restaurants and other sites in the movie. 10,000 copies of the map were printed last October prior to the L.A. premiere and by Thanksgiving weekend, all were gone (you can still get a copy by going to www.santabarbaraCA.com and downloading "Sideways, The Map"). Sanford saw a 50% increase in Pinot Noir sales in December compared to a year earlier. Business at the 52-year-old Hitching Post Restaurant is up 20%. Nationally, retailers have noticed a surge in Pinot Noir sales and both the New York Times and Boston Globe recently reported a marked increase in sales. The Hitching Post Highliner Pinot Noir (\$48), a top cuvee of the label, was ordered by Miles by name in the movie, and sales have skyrocketed. Retailers like Winebid.com and Root's Cellar in Healdsburg have offered a collection of wines featured in the movie. *Sideways*-themed dinners seem to be *de rigueur*. If you do plan a dinner, be sure and have the sound track on hand (New Line Records). It is a collection of excellent jazz by the Sideways Jazz Orchestra and includes renditions of (seriously) Slipping Away as Mum Sleeps, Walk to Hitching Post, and I'm Not Drinking Any #@%! Merlot!

For those seeking the full *Sideways* experience, read the novel by Rex Pickett (St. Martin's Griffin, 2004, soft-bound). The lineup of Pinot Noirs is a little different (some are not in the movie, and some in the movie, like Sea Smoke Botella, are not in the novel). For you trivia buffs, here are the Pinot Noirs mentioned or drunk in the novel: Gary Farrell Sonoma and Rochioli, Byron Sparkling Wine, 1995 Williams Selyem Olivet Lane, 1999 Sanford La Rinconada, 1999 Hitching Post Bien Nacido and Highliner, Byron Sierra Madre, Foxen, Longoria, 1999 Kistler Rochioli (there is no such wine that I am aware of but the line while drinking it is classic— "This Kis is delish"), 1996 Comte Armand Pommard, 1999 Ponzi Reserve, 1998 Tantara Bien Nacido, Babcock, 1985 DRC La Tache, 1990 Jayer Richebourg, Au Bon Climat, Talley Rosemary, and Brewer-Clifton. Non-Pinot wines in the novel include Veuve Cliquot, 1982 Latour, Petrus, Andrew Murray, and 1997 Silver Oak Napa (no 1961 Cheval Blanc).

There are a number of lines in the novel by Miles that are a bit too risqué or inappropriate for the screen:

"We worship Bacchus and sing hymns in the nude"

"Maya, Indian goddess of illusions. Siren of shipwrecked sailors. If only you lactated Pinot Noir, you'd be perfect."

"Let's board the bullet train to the Cote d'Or!"

"Smelling the cork is like sniffing a woman's butt before you have sex with her"

YOU'VE SEEN THE MOVIE
SIDEWAYS

NOW SEE THE REAL THING!

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Women Drawn to Pinot Noir

I have noted a trend of late. In the early years of the *PinotFile* (2001, 2002) a big majority of my subscribers were men. In the past six months, the majority has shifted to women. I polled a few of my readers and have some interesting ideas to explain this drift.

Women are researching the internet more and are active in buying and choosing wines, planning dinners, and wine weekend trips. Women now are responsible for spending 80% of the consumer dollar. In her book, *Wine for Women: A Guide to Buying, Pairing and Sharing*, Sonoma author Leslie Sbracco points out that “women ask different questions. Men ask about ratings, prices. Women ask lifestyle questions. Women focus on taste and style, not ratings. It’s all about enjoyment.” She goes on to stress that “food is strongly connected to wine, but much more so for women than for men, stressing that taste, style, food and sharing are factors critical to a woman’s involvement with wine.”



Valerie Wathen of Dutton-Goldfield Winery points out that many women take the cliché wine drinker route: start with Chardonnay and Merlot, maybe try inexpensive Pinot Noirs that did not stir much interest because of their “prune/raisin” quality, but eventually settle on Pinot Noir as the wine of choice after tasting premium Pinot Noir from good producers.

I believe many women become interested in Pinot Noir in particular because they are better tasters than men. They find the complex aromatics and taste of Pinot Noir appealing. Women are not attracted to tannic wines. In addition, they are often cooks and look for food-friendly wines like Pinot Noir. Women also quickly discover that Pinot Noir is the varietal on wine lists in restaurants that pairs with the most food choices.

The Australian Wine Bureau and Match.com, the global leader in online dating, recently released their findings from an online survey of single Americans about their attitudes toward wine and romance. Single Americans almost always choose wine to reflect their personalities and lifestyle on the first date over any other beverage. 72% felt that knowledge about wine makes a member of the opposite sex more attractive. 83% of singles agreed that a glass of wine can make an already special moment even more romantic. With women realizing that their choice of beverage provides their companion with insight into their personality and lifestyle, it is not surprising that Pinot Noir, which is often described as “all satin and silk” is their first choice.

Grape Radio

There is a new wine podcast show, Grape Radio, at www.graperadio.com. It is advertised as “The place where sharing a tremendous enthusiasm for wine gets personal.” Hosted by wine enthusiasts Brian Clark, Leigh Older, and Jay Selman, one or two shows are produced on a weekly basis. These shows consist of the three hosts sharing their opinions and experiences with the audience. Topics include the enjoyment of wine, wine news, and industry trends. The scope of the shows will be international. Each show will feature guest interviews with winemakers, vineyard owners, wine retailers, restaurateurs, and sommeliers. For example, Grape Radio Show #3, January 25th, 2005, focuses on Senior Wine Buyer John Downing from Hi-Time Wine Cellars in Costa Mesa, California.

You can either directly download the podcast on the website, or subscribe. The concept is well presented. Three knowledgeable guys sitting around discussing wine on a nonpretentious level. Very informative.



Natural Selection:

A herd of buffalo only moves as fast as the slowest buffalo and when the herd is hunted, it is the slowest buffalo at the back that is killed first. This is good for the herd as a whole, because the general speed and health of the whole group keeps improving by the regular attrition of the weakest members.

In much the same way, the human brain can only operate as fast as the slowest brain cells. Intake of alcohol, we all know, kills brain cells, but naturally it attacks the slowest and weakest brain cells first. In this way, regular consumption of Pinot Noir eliminates the weaker brain cells, making the brain faster and a more efficient machine. This is why you always feel smarter after two glasses of Pinot Noir!

Australia Postscript

I misquoted Andy Tan in the last newsletter. Regarding Tasmania Pinot Noirs, all of them are influenced by Andrew Hood who is a consultant for Domaine A and not the winemaker.

Moondarra Pinot Noir was omitted from Andy Tan's recommendations. His added comments: This cutting edge label is owned by Neil Prentice (former Melbourne-based sommelier/restaurateur) and made by Sandro Mosele and Neil at the Kooyong facility. This Domaine Leroy-inspired Pinot Noir specialist is turning out some of the most impressive Pinot Noirs I have tasted from Australia. Intense, wood-infused, and yes! black cherries, blackberries. Previously due to the practice of no destemming, the wine can at times carry too much minty, stalky element. The new vintage of Conception (starting with 2003) has shown more fruit purity and the previous fault has slowly been removed. In addition, Sandro Mosele from Kooyong has continued turning out more impressive releases of his single-vineyard Pinot Noirs. In 2003, there will be Haven, Ferrous, and Meres. All are distinctively different, well-crafted Pinot Noirs. Andy Tan will be co-producing a Pinot Noir with Sandro Mosele from the 2004 vintage (fruit from Kooyong's Ferrous Vineyard). Note: I did have the pleasure of drinking the 2001 Moondarra, Conception (provided by Andy Tan and Dr Jonathan Chan) at a dinner a few months past. I have fond memories of a superbly-crafted, complex Pinot that piqued my interest in Aussie Pinot.

I did not comment on vintage variation in Australia. Generally it is not significant in the warm regions, but there can be variation in the marginal cooler regions (especially Tasmania) where most of the Pinot Noir is planted. 2000 was an outstanding year for the Mornington Peninsula, 2001 was excellent in Victoria, but mixed in Tasmania due to rain and frost, 2002 was a difficult and variable year in Southern Australia, 2003 was excellent in Victoria and more variable in Tasmania, and 2004 looks to be a very good vintage for both Victoria and Tasmania.

Two excellent sources for further information and offerings of Australian and New Zealand wines are: The Down Under Digest by Chuck Hayward, through the retailer Jug Shop in San Francisco, jugshop.com and The WineDeli Newsletter from the retailer WineDeli in Queenstown, NZ, winedeli.com.