

**Santa Cruz  
Mountains  
Part 1**

# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotaficionados

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## Paradise for Pinot

*Twenty-five years and my life is still  
Trying to get up that great hill of hope  
For a destination  
And I realized quickly when I knew  
That the world was made up of this brotherhood of man  
For whatever that means  
  
I wake up in the morning  
I step outside  
Take a deep breath and get real high  
And I scream from the top of my lungs  
What's going on?*

These lyrics from the 4 Non-Blondes' song, "What's Going On?" seem to be very apropos for the Santa Cruz Mountains. It was a little over twenty-five years ago when excellent examples of mountain-grown Pinot Noir from David Bruce and Mount Eden gave notice of the potential of this region for premium California Pinot Noir. A certain mountain spirit now echoes through these mountains and a hardy brotherhood of passionate Pinot Noir producers are bringing some serious wines to the market. Standing in one of the picturesque Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards which overlook the Pacific Ocean or the bustling Silicon Valley and Bay Area below, it is easy to get real high. So what's going on, you ask? Pinot Noir has found a home in this California paradise.



The history of winegrowing in the Santa Cruz Mountains dates back to at least the 1850s when Agostin Haraszthy, and separately, former governor Leland Stanford, planted substantial vineyards in the hills. In 1878, Paul Masson came to San Jose, California from Burgundy, France. He planted a vineyard with cuttings from his friend, Louis Latour, and started a winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains adjacent to Mount Eden. Martin Ray grew up in the foothills below Mount Eden and became a protégé of Paul Masson. Just after Prohibition ended, Martin Ray purchased the Paul Masson Champagne Company from Masson and began his career as a winemaker. In 1942, he sold the Paul Masson property and shortly thereafter, moved up the hill, and planted his first vineyard at Mount Eden to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay (Cabernet Sauvignon was added in the 1950s). He called his estate 'Martin Ray' and became the first boutique wine model and the first to produce a 100% Pinot Noir varietal table wine in California. Martin Ray's years on the mountain are recorded in a book authored by his widow titled, *Vineyards in the Sky*.

David Bruce was a practicing dermatologist when he developed an interest in making wine. He started out by making wine in Oregon from Concord grapes. Subsequently, it was Martin Ray who inspired him to take winemaking seriously. The David Bruce Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains was bonded in 1964 and Bruce made his first commercial Pinot Noir in 1966. His early trials with Pinot Noir were marked by hits and misses, with Brettanomyces causing problems in a number of his wines. In those early years, wine writer Matt Kramer was less than enthusiastic about Bruce's Pinot Noirs and proclaimed that "there is no hope for Pinot Noir in America." Bruce's combination of passion and scientific curiosity prevailed and he eventually produced pioneering efforts with Pinot Noir. He was one of the first California winemakers to use whole-berry fermentation in making red wines and advocate foot crushing, extensive skin contact, and small-barrel French oak fermentation.

There are a number of lesser-known, but equally important, winegrowing pioneers in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Their story is told in detail in two books: *Like Modern Edens: Winegrowing in Santa Clara Valley and Santa Cruz Mountains, 1798-1981*, written by Charles Sullivan and published in 1982, and more recently, *Mountain Vines, Mountain Wines: Exploring the Wineries of the Santa Cruz Mountains*, written by Casey Young and Ken Dawes.

The Santa Cruz Mountains Viticultural Appellation was federally approved in 1981 and was one of the first American viticultural areas to be defined by geophysical, altitudinal and climatic factors. The appellation includes the Santa Cruz Mountain range from Half Moon Bay in the north, to Corralitos and Mount Madonna in the south. The east and west boundaries are defined by elevation, extending down to 800 feet in the east and 400 feet in the west. The large appellation has 408,467 acres but only about 1,350 acres are planted to vineyards, many of which are tiny 1-5-acre plantings on moderately steep hillsides above the fog line. The largest grower, Beauregard Vineyards, manages about 100 acres. Because of the limited vines, many wineries source fruit from outside the appellation. But it is the Santa Cruz Mountain fruit which is most prized and produces the most distinctive Pinot Noirs.

The quality of the grapes grown in the Santa Cruz Mountain appellation is unquestioned but the challenges in growing wine in this mountainous terrain and often harsh climate are numerous. The vineyard sites are often remote, irrigation water is very limited or nonexistent, pests including birds, deer and gophers are ever-present, skilled labor is hard to find, and yields are typically less than two tons-per-acre. A number of well-heeled Silicon Valley entrepreneurs have found the mountains appealing leading to a notable increase in acreage planted in the last several years. It is the small and determined family producers, however, whose wines seem to best exemplify the pinosity of the region.

There are now at least 70 wineries in the appellation, 31 of which make a Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir. With multiple bottlings from some wineries, there may be as many as 75 Pinot Noirs from fruit grown in the region. In the past, many of the wineries here were thought of as run by hippies and

perennial underachievers. That is certainly not the case today. With modern grape-growing know how, including proper trellising, canopy management, avoidance of over cropping, and planting of proper clones, the quality here is almost universally excellent and improving every year. A number of very experienced vineyard consultants including Pruddie Fox and Greg Stokes are now actively involved in assisting clients in choosing appropriate sites and planting successful vineyards.

The Pinot Noirs from the Santa Cruz Mountains reflect the unique terroir here. The distinctive, rocky, well-drained soils add an appealing minerality. The extended growing season creates grapes with complex and intense flavors and bright acidity. The grapes ripen in cool temperatures as the daily fog rolls in sometime in the late afternoon or early evening with the sun burning it off the next morning. The result is Pinot Noir in its purest expression: lovely aromatics, luscious red fruit flavors, soft tannins, all packaged in a light to medium bodied wine so juicy you can 'nibble' at it



View of Pacific Ocean from Soquel Vineyards estate vineyard

The quality of the wines coming from the Santa Cruz Mountains is exemplified by the recent number of medals won at the prestigious 2006 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. Santa Cruz Mountain wineries won a total of 78 medals including 19 Gold Medals, including two Gold Best of Class, and 10 Gold Medals overall for Pinot Noir. In addition to all of the Gold Medals, the appellation won 30 Silver Medals and 29 Bronze. Almost 40% of the medals won were for Pinot Noir, most from grapes grown in the Santa Cruz Mountains. For a full list of the winning wines, peruse the Santa Cruz Mountains Wine-grower's Association website at [www.scmwa.com](http://www.scmwa.com).

I recently spent two days touring the Santa Cruz Mountains and sampling Pinot Noirs from numerous wineries. I returned a convert and a believer in the incredible quality and appeal of Pinot Noir from those mountains. The wines are just flat-out great and worth your serious interest. Pinot seventh-heaven.

## Mount Eden - Old World Pinot from an Island in the Sky

In 1942, the enigmatic Martin Ray sold the Paul Masson property near the town of Saratoga to Seagrams, and with the inspiration of Paul Masson, moved north to the top of the adjacent hill. Here he planted a vineyard at Mount Eden to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The location was, and still is, a bit isolated. A winding eight mile dirt road leads up to Mount Eden which is perched at 2000 ft on the top of the mountain like a viticultural island. It has been likened to a “ship at sea” in that it is completely exposed on all sides to winds and storms. When I visited recently, there was a twenty foot timber on the ground that had been blown off the house by a recent windstorm (see photo below). The timber house was built in the early 1950s by Ray and now is the home of owner and winemaker Jeffrey Patterson. The entrance to the underground winery can be seen to the right of the timber on the ground.



Jeffrey Patterson told me about the interesting history of the property. The original Pinot Noir and Chardonnay plantings here were obtained from Paul Masson’s vineyard and grafted to rootstock by a local nursery. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were logical choices for this mountainous terroir. Cabernet Sauvignon was a later addition, added in the 1950s. Cabernet from mountainous coastal vineyards is unique to the Santa Cruz Mountains. Ray started here completely from scratch. He was an iconoclast and was dogmatic in style. The isolated location was appropriate since he did not get along with anyone. He was, however, ahead of his time and an innovator. His winery was essentially the first boutique winery model in California and he was the first to produce a 100% Pinot Noir varietal wine. At the time, grape varietals were always blended. He bottled his wines in heavy glass bottles, used small oak cooperage, limited his production, estate bottled his wines, and sold the wines at very high prices for the time. He bottled some of his still wines in sparkling wine bottles until wine writer Robert Lawrence Balzer wrote that he was “deceiving the public,” and he was forced to discontinue the practice. Patterson pointed out that “this actually made a lot of sense if the aim was to age the wine for a long time.”

It was clear to Paul Masson and Martin Ray that premium wine could only be grown in the soils of the mountains. At the time Ray started Mount Eden, the Valley below was all farms with a few scattered farmhouses. The soil here was too thick and alluvial to grow wine grapes. But the mountains provided formidable obstacles. There no wells at the time so he had to get the vineyard established using rain water and water from springs. Annual rainfall here in a quality year is 30-35 inches, (enough to currently dry farm). All work had to be performed by hand as no farm equipment could operate in the steep vineyards. Ray used redwood stakes to support the vines and trained the vines in a vertical growth system. One to three basket canes were brought vertically. This was a strange trellising system but it did limit yields. The vines were planted in a 10 ft by 10 ft arrangement.

Ray boasted that he could vinify world-class wines to rival those of France, The truth was, "Ray's wines were hit and miss," Patterson told me. "He had some successes, but several wines were uncommercial." Unfortunately, when Patterson arrived, there were no library wines at the winery. Several years ago I obtained two bottles of Martin Ray Pinot Noir from a Bay Area warehouse. I still have one bottle which I never plan to open (see photo). The wine is not vintage dated. The label reads, *La Montana California Pinot Noir*. At the bottom, alcohol contents are 13% by volume. I think the label is very classy for its time.



Ray eventually lost ownership of the property to his investor partners and his 1970 vintage was the last he made from those vineyards. The new partners renamed the place 'Mount Eden Vineyards' and

made their first vintage of Pinot Noir in 1972 from 29-year-old vines. Over the years, there were a succession of capable winemakers including Richard Graff, Peter Graff, Mary Edwards, Bill Anderson, and Fred Peterson. Jeffrey Patterson arrived here in 1981 and has never left. Mount Eden's lineage of estate bottled Chardonnay and Pinot Noir is the longest in California.

Patterson started a stepwise replanting of the vineyard here in 1984. The vines were heavily virused. He kept one acre of the original vines as a "mother vineyard". The Mount Eden selection/clone (#37) is still used in a number of Pinot Noir vineyards in California. Patterson replanted the six other acres of Pinot Noir to Winery Lake, Mount Eden, Swan, Calera, and Dijon clones 115, 667, 777, and 828. The estate Pinot Noir is a mosaic of all of these clones. Today, the estate totals forty acres of vineyards: 20 acres of Chardonnay, 7 acres of Pinot Noir, and 13 acres of a Cabernet blend including some Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The Pinot Noir vineyard, adjacent to the house and winery, is pictured below. Patterson describes his vista as "a ying-yang view." To the west is the Santa Clara Valley (upper photo) and to the east are the mountains (lower photo). The estate is 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean as the crow flies.



Patterson admits that “Pinot Noir is not an easy grape.” The Mount Eden Estate Pinot Noir is an old world style. The coolness, low rainfall, old clones and winemaking produce a wine that is more austere than opulent. It is set apart from the normal California style by virtue of its higher tannins and acidity (similarly true for the Estate Chardonnay and Cabernet). Patterson notes that the Pinot Noirs are hard to pick out of a flight of French Burgundies.

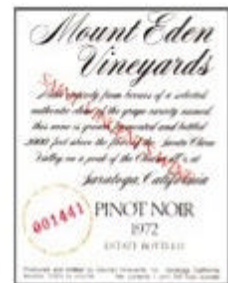
Patterson strives for a more delicate style that is lighter and “when you stick your nose in the glass you know it is Pinot Noir.” Grapes are picked at moderate ripeness and he does not ferment or age the wine a long time. Natural yeasts are used. Aging is in 75% new and 25% one-year-old French Burgundy barrels. The best drinking window for the Mount Eden Pinot Noirs is 7-10 years. With aging, the wine gains color and secondary characters appear in the nose around 5 years. He finds no particular value in aging the Pinot Noirs beyond 10 years.

Yields of Pinot Noir are quite limited on the mountain and vary from 1/2 ton to 2 tons. Patterson believes 2 tons is ideal for maximum flavor and aromatic interest. Cluster weights vary from year to year by a magnitude of five. In 2005, heavy raining in the Spring yielded only six barrels of Pinot Noir. In 25 years on the mountain, he had never seen a harvest that small. Although many winemakers make the claim that quality is often achieved at very small yields, Patterson does not agree. “It doesn’t mean the wines will be better. When there are a lot of shot berries and few resultant grapes, the vines shut down. The vines need grapes to do their thing. Yields on the low side are fine, but severely restricted yields are not desirable.”



First leaf, early March, old Pinot Noir vine at Mount Eden

To commemorate the last vintage from the old Pinot Noir vines, 200 cases of a **1997 Mount Eden Cuvée des Vieilles Vignes Pinot Noir** were bottled separately from the Estate Pinot Noir. This is the only Mount Eden Pinot Noir of the decade to be made solely from Martin Ray’s old vines. On this trip, I had the opportunity to taste this wine out of a magnum. Drinking this heritage wine nearly brought me to my knees. Early on, flavors of earth and barnyard predominated. After some air time, the wine blossomed into a silky concoction of raspberries, cassis, cream and layers of complexity that bedazzled my senses. This was The Garden of Eden. If you see a bottle on the secondary market, snatch it for it often sells for around \$40, a ridiculous bargain.



**2003 Mount Eden Estate Pinot Noir** (not released). This is a medium weight Pinot Noir with a gorgeous garnet robe. The aromatics are floral and fruity. The red Pinot fruits are well balanced on a silky frame and the wine finishes with dusty tannins and refreshing acidity. This is pretty special.

The Estate Chardonnays from Mount Eden are one of California's longest-lived white wines. Of all Mount Eden's estate-grown wines, the Chardonnay is most in need of further bottle aging at release, needing an additional two to four years to fully reveal its true character. Last year, Dr. Bipin Desai organized a special retrospective of Mount Eden Estate Chardonnay: 28 vintages from 1976 to 2003 all served from magnum! According to Jeffrey Patterson, who was in attendance, the best flight was the last one, 1978 to 1982. J.P Miller of the Peninsula Wine Tasting Group in California, had this to say about Mount Eden Chardonnay: "For many years, and I constantly test this, I find Jeffrey Patterson's Mount Eden Chardonnay to be among the best California Chardonnays. Part of my preference for it is that it resembles white Burgundy at its best - maybe not the best grand cru (although sometimes it's close), but certainly top-level premier cru."



Photo courtesy of Laura Ness

Driving down the tortuous road from the Mount Eden Estate, it was only appropriate to see a rainbow in the vista. Spending some time at this historic mountain winery left me with a sense of awe of the sheer beauty of the location and a feeling of admiration for the accomplishments of Jeffrey Patterson who has carried on the tradition of Martin Ray and preserved his legacy for all wine lovers to savor. Wine at the end of the rainbow.

The winery is open by appointment only. The wines are available at selected retail stores and from the winery. The website is [www.mounteden.com](http://www.mounteden.com). The phone is 888-865-9463. Besides the Estate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Sauvignon, Mount Eden produces two value-priced Chardonnays from Edna Valley (Wolff Vineyard and an Edna Ranch release), and a Saratoga Cuvee Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet. These are excellent wines for more immediate drinking.



Photo courtesy of Laura Ness





## Burrell School: I Promise to Sip My Pinot Noir

The origins of Burrell School go back to 1854 when Lyman J. Burrell settled here. The bell tower silhouette on the label honors the historic 1890 Burrell School. The school house on the property was used by the local Ladies' Auxiliary for years until it was closed in 1954. Dave and Anne Moulton purchased 20 acres here including the school house in 1973. The initial plantings began in 1976, but the Zinfandel and Gewurztraminer did not perform well due to several drought years. Undaunted, the Moultons ripped out all of the vines and replanted from 1996 to 2000 with multiple varieties - Syrah, Merlot, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Franc.



Dave is an engaging personality who has many skills. He worked for years in the aircraft industry as an electrical engineer. He began making beer in 1967, but his interest soon turned to wine. He attended UC Davis and earned a degree in Enology. After purchasing the property, Dave continued his day job as an engineer for years, selling off most of his grapes and making wine as a hobby. In 1992, the winery was bonded and he built a small winery two years later. The original school house was lovingly preserved and became the living room of their residence which was attached. As the winery became more successful, the school house was converted into a quaint tasting room. The room still has the original blackboards which urge visitors to "Promise to Sip Their Wine."



The Ladies' Auxiliary had painted the interior yellow and white and painted over the beautiful oak window frames. Dave is slowly restoring the interior to its former grandeur. The original wood-burning pot-belly heater stands in the center of the room and along one side is a tasting bar. On the opposite wall, the wines are lined up in old wooden crates. The day I visited, I was fortunate to taste all of the Burrell School current releases and dine in the school house tasting room with Anne and Dave as well as and Greg and Laura Ness who assist the Moultons in the day-to-day operations of the winery. The Moultons and Nesses are extremely gracious hosts who are devoted to making fine wine. I can

vouch for their good cooking as well. They have created a very unique heritage school theme that runs through the names of their wines: "Principal's Choice" Pinot Noir, "Dean's List" Cabernet, "Teacher's Pet" Chardonnay and so forth. Currently they are running a contest with their customers

find a name for their new Cabernet Franc. In keeping with this theme, the stereo in the tasting room has been playing Sinatra all week ('Franc', get it?). When I visited, they knew all of the customers in the tasting room by their first name which I found to be commonplace in Santa Cruz Mountain tasting rooms. So "old school," but so much a part of the charm of this mountain community.



L to R: Greg, Laura, Dave, Anne

The winery and vineyards are situated at 1,600 feet well above the fog that drifts in almost daily. The days are warm and the nights cool, resulting in a long growing season ideal for cool climate grapes. I found all of the wines produced here at Burrell School very easy drinking. Certainly the reds like Merlot and Cabernet Franc have good tannic structure, but the tannins are soft and produce a rich, but silky texture. The wines are very varietal-specific. Burrell School wines have been professionally recognized with multiple medals awarded in major wine competitions.

The Pinot Noirs, beginning with the 2001 vintage have been excellent. The 2001 and 2002 Reserve Pinot Noirs were sourced from three Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards. In 2003, there are two Pinot Noirs: an Estate bottling composed of Dijon clones 05, 115, 667, 777 (photo),



and a Veranda Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir. This is basically a one-man operation with Dave handling all of the winegrowing and winemaking chores. Dave even repairs and utilizes old Cleveland Tractors in his vineyards daily. He currently has thirteen old tractors in various states of restoration. This tractor pictured below is circa 1940. Dave is helping to preserve the Cleveland company's tagline: "Built to Endure." Oh, Dave also has three model T's but that's another story.



**2002 Burrell School Reserve 'Principal's Choice' Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**

725 cases, \$30. Three vineyards were selected: 33% Veranda Vineyard, 33% Amaya Ridge Vineyard, and 33% Pinto Valley Vineyard. Aged 18 months in 60% new French Meyrieux, Rousseau, and Saint Martin Burgundy barrels. This lovely, medium-bodied Pinot Noir features dark fruits, earth, toast and graham crackers. It reminds me of a teacher I had in 6th grade: smells great, has plenty of body, offers plenty of sass, and makes you sit up straight in your seat.



**2003 Burrell School Estate Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**

14.6% alc., 325 cases, \$42. 70% new French oak. Terrific aromatics with notes of wild strawberries, cherries and fields of flowers. Flavors of chocolate-covered cherries. The tannins are like fine suede and the wine finishes with bracing acidity. Too good for students.

**2003 Burrell School Veranda Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**

14.6% alc., 700 cases, \$38. The Veranda Vineyard is located in the southern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains Appellation. Elevation is 600 feet. The vineyard is planted to a mixture of Dijon clones and Pommard. Barrel aged in 70% new French oak. This is a darker, richer Pinot Noir than the Estate bottling. The nose is complex with dried fruits, roses and sandalwood. A big mouth feel with ample strawberries, rhubarb, spice and mushrooms leads to a long finish with dusty tannins. A well-schooled Pinot.

If you promise to sip your wines and be good, Dave may prescribe several ounces of detention! Burrell School wines may be purchased on the winery's website at [www.burrellschool.com](http://www.burrellschool.com) or by phoning the Moultons at 408-353-6290. The 2003 Pinot Noirs will be released in May, 2006. The tasting room is open weekends 11:00 to 5:00 at 24060 Summit Road. The view of the neighboring canyons and ridges of the Santa Cruz Mountain is spectacular.

## Soquel Vineyards: A Family Affair

The history of Soquel ("So-Cal") Vineyards is inescapably tied to the history of winegrowing in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Bargetto Winery was started in the mountains in 1933 by John and Philip Bargetto. Grandson twins Peter and Paul Bargetto, along with friend Jon Morgan, began their own winery in 1987 after venturing out from the family winemaking business. Recently, Peter and Paul purchased land once owned by their grandfather as the site of their new winery facility.

A picturesque drive to the winery from the tiny town of Soquel carries one along a winding two lane road dotted with vineyards and scattered residences. Three miles from Soquel, the winery facility is found on a small turnoff. It has almost like finding nirvana what with its sweeping view of the Monterey Bay coastline set amidst towering trees. There is a definite feeling of return to nature here. The winery itself is full of history. The roof is made of handmade Italian tiles dating from 1751 and the doors of the winery are even older, composed of 1800-year-old first growth redwood that formerly was part of a redwood tank used by the twin's grandfather, John Bargetto, and built in 1945. The driveway leading to the winery is lined with Italian cypress trees, rosemary, and lavender. The exterior of the winery reflects an Italian heritage, but there are no Italian varietals made here.



The Sunday I visited (the tasting room is open Saturdays and Sundays), the tasting room was filled with enthusiastic wine tasters, many of whom were locals picking up their monthly supply or eagerly tasting barrel samples of the 2005 vintage. Both Peter and Paul are energetic and personable winemakers whose enthusiasm enlivens the tasting room.

The Bargettos concentrate on Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Zinfandel, Chardonnay and most recently Pinot Noir. The consumer's new interest in Pinot Noir has shifted their wine portfolio more toward this grape. Their 2003 Partner's Santa Cruz Mountains Reserve and 2004 Santa Cruz Mountains Saveria Vineyard Pinot Noirs are sold out and both received Gold Medals at the prestigious San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. They recently planted a four-acre vineyard on their new property and currently source their grapes from vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Russian River Valley and Napa. Most wines are made in approximately 400 case lots. The Pinot Noirs are aged in 100% new or one year old French oak.

This view of the Soquel Vineyards tasting room shows the unique 9 x 11 ft. tapestry which was a gift designed and produced by the Chissotti family, Peter Bargetto's in-laws, in Chieri Italy. It is a reproduction of the first Soquel Vineyards wine label.



**2003 Soquel Vineyards Partner's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** \$55. A well-constructed Pinot Noir that holds its oak seamlessly. A pretty nose of chocolate cherries and fresh flowers. The texture is silky. The finish is sweet and dry. Plenty of pinosity here.

**2004 Soquel Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., \$25. A medium bodied wine with a pretty garnet color. It is a simple Pinot Noir, not particularly complex, but still a very nice drink. The aromatics are very alluring with cherries, cinnamon and sandalwood evident. Plenty of acid for food. A solid daily drinker.

**2004 Soquel Vineyards Raffaelli and Martin Ray Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** \$25 A lighter style of Pinot Noir that is really attractive. The red Pinot fruits are nicely integrated with fine tannins and the bright finish leaves you reaching for another sip.

**2004 Soquel Vineyards Partners Reserve Muns Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$50. A delicate wine that is bright and crisp. There is no burdensome oak or alcohol here. The flavors are pure with red fruits and a hint of cinnamon and vanilla. I could drink this like water. A balanced wine that is a credit to the winemakers. A little more mid-palate fullness would make it a complete Pinot Noir.

**2004 Soquel Vineyards Partners Reserve Saveria Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$50. Dark garnet in color, this is full-throttle Pinot Noir. The nose is heavy with toasty oak and ripe cherries. The fruits are dark, robust and oak-tinged. The finish is robust and a touch hot. This is a big wine that will be coveted by those who enjoy the 'Caliesque' style of Pinot Noir.

**2005 Soquel Vineyards Lester Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** (barrel sample). A toasty nose leads to delicious notes of dark cherries, cranberries and mushrooms. The mouth feel is sensuous and the finish rocks. This is just a Lolita but wait till it grows up. Futures on this wine are now for sale.

Wines may be purchased by phoning 831-462-9045. The website is [www.soquelvineyards.com](http://www.soquelvineyards.com). To really become attached to these wines, however, visit the winery at 8063 Glen Haven Road, Soquel, California and talk Pinot with Peter or Paul.



PrinceofPinot.com

Many more excellent Santa Cruz  
Mountain Pinot Noir producers reviewed  
next week in Part 2

## Santa Cruz Mountains Part 1

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Santa Cruz Mountains has become a prominent producer of Pinot Noir but it was not always the promised land. Randall Graham began his career in the wine business in the early 1980s, hoping to make a great California Pinot Noir. His 1975 Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir was so promising, he started a winery in the region called Bonny Doon. He soon realized, however, that he could make better Pinot Noir from Oregon grapes and by 1985 had budded over his entire vineyard to Rhone varietals.

Ken Burnap studied Burgundy for a number of years and set up a series of criteria for Pinot Noir vineyard success. The Santa Cruz Mountains met the criteria best and in 1974 he bought the 13 acre Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyards. Burnap's Pinot Noirs were rustic, acidic and tannic and took years to mature. They were nothing like other California Pinot Noirs then or since. Never considered a vin de garde, his Pinot Noirs still had character, and remain an important legacy in the history of Pinot Noir in California.

## Santa Cruz Mountains Annual Events

**Pinot in Paradise** March 25 & 26, 2006. More than 30 Santa Cruz Mountain wineries pour their best Pinot Noirs. Seminars, dinners, silent auction and winery tours.

**Passport Program** For \$25, you receive a Passport to the wineries, including many that are not open to the public at other times. Each winery stamps the Passport after you have visited, and when the Passport is turned in, the holder receives an award. Passport wineries are open on the third Saturday in January, April, July, and November.

**Santa Cruz Mountains Wine Auction: Wine with Heart** A Friday night Dinner and Auction held each Spring. The Sunday afternoon Grand Tasting and Auction provides an opportunity to sample all of the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers at one location.

**Vintner's Festival** This event is held on the first two weekends in June at wineries and restaurants throughout the area. To join the festivities, you purchase a glass at any participating festival location. The glass is your ticket to all festival sites.

**Santa Cruz County Fair Commercial Wine Competition** The medal winners are displayed in mid-September.

**Wine & Crab Taste Off** Local restaurants create flavorful dishes with local crab. Regional wines are paired with the fare. Participants cast their votes for their favorite recipe.

For information about these events, visit the web at [www.scmwa.com](http://www.scmwa.com) or phone 831-479-WINE (9463).