

**If Pinot Noir is
the next best
thing to sex - you
must be having
really good sex.**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Adventures Along the Pinot Trail, Part 3

Pinot Days in San Francisco has become the Big Daddy of all Pinot Noir tastings. Hundreds of pinot geeks descended on Fort Mason Festival Pavilion on Sunday, July 1st, 2007, for the 3rd Annual Pinot Days. There were 182 producers on hand, each pouring several Pinot Noirs making the total wines presented close to 500! One had to be well conditioned to swirl, sip and spit even a small portion of the Pinot Noirs over the 5-6 hour time-frame of the Grand Tasting. It was a unique opportunity to sample the wines of very small boutique operations whose wines have limited distribution.

Walk-around tastings are not the best format for technically and seriously tasting wine, but worthwhile impressions and glimpses can be obtained for the dedicated taster. Occasionally the 'wow factor' will pop up and put a big grin on your face. For me, these events are more about renewing friendships, making new ones, and becoming better acquainted with the people behind the wines. As Master of Wine Tim Atkin has said, "The character, ambition and talent of the person who made it is highly relevant to how that wine tastes. I want to know about these things, just as I want to know about vintage conditions, personal eccentricities, and a winemaker's take on the world. All of those things make wine different; all these things make wine special."

Pinot Days is more than a large walk-around tasting. On Friday night, a special Winemaker Dinner was held featuring several prominent Pinot Noir producers whose wines were paired with appropriate gourmet cuisine. On Saturday, there were Focus Tastings, including Best of Anderson Valley, Best of Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley, and a Comparison Tasting of Rosella's and Pisoni Vineyards. It was encouraging to see many millennials attend the events. So often at Pinot Noir celebrations, the crowd is dominated by well-healed retirees. We need the newer wine-drinking generation to fawn over Pinot Noir so that its surge in popularity will continue. This will benefit us all.

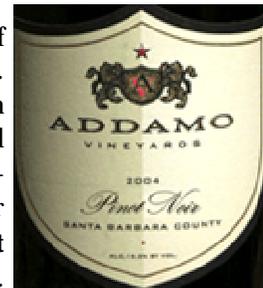
Pinot Days has become so popular that events are now held in New York (next event Spring, 2008) and Chicago (next event Fall, 2007). The organizers are the Bay Area Wine Project headed by Steve and Lisa Rigisich and Eric and Teri White. To keep informed of future Pinot Days and Bay Area Pinot Noir tastings and winemaker dinners, visit the website at www.pinotdays.com.

I spent a good part of my time at the event interviewing winemakers and wine personalities for Grape Radio. However, I did do enough tasting to be able to highlight specific Pinot Noirs that stood out to me at this Pinot pageant. It is senseless to go into depth with detailed tasting notes as the numerous distractions (smells, noise, and laughter) make such an effort futile. Sometimes you just need to enjoy Pinot and not dissect it. The general consensus of many at the event was that the overall quality of Pinot Noir was at an all-time high. I have omitted many stellar producers and/or wines that I have reviewed in the *PinotFile* during the last several months to avoid repetition.

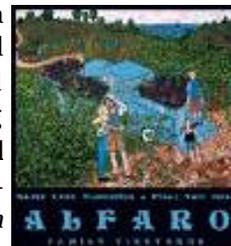




Addamo Estate Vineyards The Addamo Estate Vineyard is located in the hills of the Santa Maria Valley in Orcutt, roughly 10 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. 75% of the 30-acre vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir with four different Dijon clones. Planting commenced in 2000. The grapes are balanced at the soil level and hand harvested yields are less than one and a half tons per acre. The winemaker is Justin Mund, the vineyard manager is Bill Kesselring, and the proprietor is David Addamo. **2005 Addamo Estate Vineyards Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** (\$35). *Soft, gentle, and complex showing a nice touch. Very appealing.* Website: www.addamoestate.com. 805-937-6750.



Alfaro Family Vineyards and Martin Alfaro Wines Owner Richard Alfaro, a former baker, and winemaker Joe Martin craft several Pinot Noirs from purchased and estate fruit. The estate vineyards are located in Corralitos at the southern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains Appellation. This area has one of the longest growing seasons in California. **2005 Alfaro Family Vineyards Lindsay Paige Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** (\$40). Small yields (3/4 ton per acre), 100% destemmed, 19 months in 70% new French oak. *Nice structure and acid backbone with plenty of enticing Pinot fruits, a little earthiness, and fine tannins on the finish.* Website: www.alfarowine.com. 831-728-5172.



Anthill Farms Winery A collaboration between Anthony Filiberti, David Low, and Webster Marquez, who met while working at Williams Selyem. The first two vintages (2004, 2005) have been outstanding. **2005 Anthill Farms Winery Tina Marie Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$43). *Marvelous wine with elegant fruit and spice to spare. Soft in texture with a nice acid lift on the finish.* **2005 Anthill Farms Winery Peters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$38). **2005 Anthill Farms Winery Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (\$38). *All good - take your pick.* Website: www.anthillfarms.com. 707-490-5191.



Aubin Cellars A boutique producer of Pinot Noir under the “Verve” label from the Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, and Dundee Hills of Oregon. Owner Jerome Aubin is a French barrel importer. The winemakers are Loren Tayerie (Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley) and Ray Walsh, formerly of King Estate and now with his own label Capitello (Oregon). **2005 Verve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (4 barrels, \$24). *A shy and reduced nose leads to a core of dark fruits and barnyard notes. Very nice soft-on-the-palate texture.* The wines are sensibly priced. The website, www.aubincellars.com, is very informative and wines may be ordered here. 510-339-0170.



Auteur This small producer is the personal label of winemaker Kenneth Juhasz who is also the winemaker at Donum Estate in Carneros. His years of work in Oregon have allowed him to develop superb sources for his Oregon Pinot Noirs - Shea Vineyard and Hyland Vineyard. He also crafts Pinot Noir from the Sonoma Stage Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast and Mendocino Ridge Vineyard in the Mendocino Ridge region. **2006 Auteur Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** (\$60). *I have also had the 2005 vintage of this wine and both are fine. Uplifting aromatics lead to a full-bodied style of Pinot Noir that is packed with fruit, spice, soy and a deft oak touch.* Nowadays, the words “Shea Vineyard” on the bottle pretty much guarantees money well spent. Website: www.auteurwines.com. 707-938-9211.



Benovia Winery This new producer in Santa Rosa is a superstar in the making. Owner Jim Anderson has provided the financial support to create a state-of-the-art winery and to resurrect the aging Cohn Vineyard. Talented winemaker Mike Sullivan (who made many brilliant Pinot Noirs at Hartford Family Winery and was named Wine Personality of the Year 2002 by Robert Parker) is at the top of his game. Manager Bob Mosby is the face of Benovia and holds the show together.. **2006 Benovia Cohn Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$60). *The best Pinot yet from this vineyard made famous by Burt Williams of Williams Selyem and Michael Browne of Kosta Browne. A complete wine displaying power with elegance.* Sullivan crafts terrific Chardonnay and Zinfandel as well. Website: www.benoviawinery.com. 707-526-4441. Get on the mailing list NOW!



Buena Vista Carneros In a previous issue I wrote about the new Buena Vista. Winemaker Jeff Stewart has led the renaissance and return to excellence here. If you haven't checked out Buena Vista recently, you are in for a pleasant surprise. **2005 Buena Vista Carneros EVS Ramal Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$37). 12 clones (several Dijon, Pommard, Martini, Swan, 2A) are planted in the estate vineyard. *Nicely composed with fresh red and blue Pinot fruits, fine-grained tannins, and a memorable finish.* Website: www.buonavistacarneros.com. 707-938-1266.

Carneros Della Notte Owners David Harmon, Darin Applebury and Sal Godinez craft two Pinot Noirs from Carneros. David Harmon is also an author and recently released an excellent novel set in the winemaking world of Napa Valley - *The Good Life*. Highly recommended reading. **2004 Carneros Della Notte Carneros Pinot Noir** (\$48). This wine was the women's favorite of the more than 230 Pinot Noirs submitted to the 2007 Pinot Noir Shootout. *The nose of wild strawberries and raspberries carries through to the flavors and the finish ends with a raspberry kiss. There is plenty of juicy fruit, gossamer tannins and superb balance.* Website: www.carnerosdellanotte.com. 707-312-1202.



Churchill Cellars A newer label on Olivet Road in Santa Rosa owned by Ken and Susan Churchill. The winemaker is noted veteran Anthony Austin. **2005 Churchill Cellars Bella Luna Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$45). The 1-acre Bella Luna Vineyard is the only one in the Russian River Valley planted with the new Dijon clone 459. *The most striking feature of this wine is the leather and dark chocolate aromas and flavors which are quite unique and attributable to clone 459.* Website: www.churchill-cellars.com. 707-578-5393.



Clary Ranch Wines Paul Clary farms a 15-acre vineyard at the headwaters to Chileno Creek in the hills of Petaluma (see photo below). **2004 Clary Ranch Grower's Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$50). *This wine has really mellowed since I tasted it last year. It is stacked and packed with fruit, but the tannins have softened and the texture is marshmallow soft.* Website: www.claryranch.com. 707-773-3884.



Clos Saron Gideon Bienstock crafts distinctive and interesting wines from vineyards in the Sierra Foothills. His own estate vineyard is located in a special cool microclimate (Oregon House, California) and is the source for a terroir-driven and well-endowed Pinot Noir that is produced in tiny quantities. Good Pinot is where you find it. **2005 Clos Saron Home Vineyard Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** (\$45). *A strikingly refined Pinot Noir with appealing cherry and berry flavors and lovely elegance. The 2006 barrel sample is equally impressive.* **2005 Clos Saron Texas Hill Road Vineyard Sierra Foothills Pinot Noir** (\$35). *A more structured and tannic Pinot Noir that is quite apart from the Home Vineyard style, but retains its own rustic and earthy charm. The 2006 barrel sample was even better (Gideon began farming the vineyard in 2006 and it shows).* Website: www.clossaron.com. 530-692-1080.



Copeland Creek The recently widowed owner of the Pfendler Vineyard from which winemaker Don Baumhefner made a wonderful Pinot Noir has moved in another direction and hired Greg Bjornstad as winemaker. Don is now the winemaker at Ridgeway Vineyard (Petaluma - Sonoma Coast).

Dain Wines David Dain Smith produces small amounts of vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs at CrushPad in San Francisco. David still lives in Missouri and commutes to make wine in California. His wines have improved each year and are as bright as his ever-present smile. **2005 Savage Juliet Hein Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (\$42). *Attention-getting cherry and cinnamon driven aromatics lead to a solid core of spiced red Pinot fruits on a bed of roses.* Website: www.DainWines.com. 417-860-2715.



D'Argenzio Winery Three generations of the D'Argenzio family are involved in this winery that specializes in Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and Cabernet. The family can trace their roots back to Napoli, Italy. The Italians have a long history with Pinot Noir in Sonoma (think Rochioli, Bacigalupi, Forchini, Martinelli and so forth). Raymond D'Argenzio has carried on the tradition and was pouring two delicious Pinot Noirs at the event. **2004 D'Argenzio Thorn Ridge Ranch-Klopp Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 283 cases, \$48, and **2004 D'Argenzio Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 405 cases, \$36. *Both wines are well-crafted in a medium-bodied style with appealing varietal flavors and a nice suppleness in the mouth.* Website: www.d'argenziowine.com. 707-546-2466.



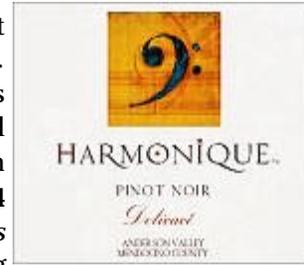
Eric Kent Wine Cellars Kent Humphrey (below) has burst on the Sonoma wine scene with two vintages of exceptional Pinot Noirs, Syrahs and Chardonnays. He had run out of his 2006 barrel samples when I reached his booth.. I will be reporting on the 2005 Pinot Noirs in a future issue (his 2005 Stiling Vineyard Pinot Noir is sold out). His wife chooses the artwork for the beautiful labels and I am sure these will become collectables in the future (drink the wine, keep the labels). Website: www.erickentwines.com, 707-527-9700.



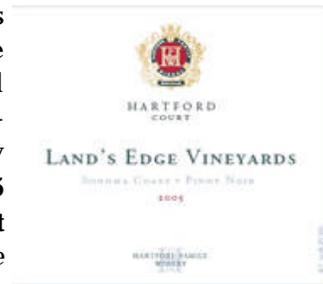
Handley Cellars Owner Milla Handley is one of Anderson Valley's originals and a highly respected winemaker. **2005 Handley Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (\$30). *A perfect expression of Anderson Valley. Perfumed with spiced cherries, anchored by a solid core of red and blue fruits, and ending with brisk acidity and pleasing persistence, this is really easy drinking. Gold Medal, Orange County Fair Wine Competition.* Website: www.handleycellars.com. 800-773-3151,



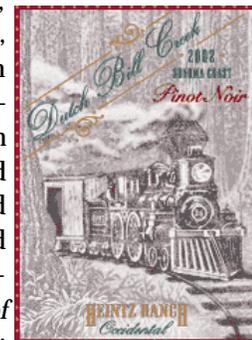
Harmonique Partners Bruce Conzelman and winemaker Robert Klindt (Claudia Springs) produce two Pinot Noirs from Anderson Valley Vineyards. One vineyard has 29-year-old vines and the other, the Klindt Vineyard, has 8-year-old vines. Conzelman has purchased the Christine Woods vineyard across from Handley Cellars and production and offerings will be expanded in the future. The Noble One I have raved about in previous issues. **2004 Harmonique Delicace' Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (\$53). *This wine is feminine in style, yet retains impressive flavor complexity. The palate is long and spicy with plenty of vim and vigor. Serious juice that is flat-out great.* The wines are sold primarily to a mailing list. Website: www.harmoniquewine.com. 707-937-1899.



Hartford Family Winery Winemaker Jeff Mangahas has taken the reins from Mike Sullivan (now at Benovia) and has continued the string of fine Pinot Noirs sourced from prime vineyards in Sonoma County, Carneros and the Anderson Valley. Hartford Family currently offers 7 different vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs under the Hartford Court label. The Hartford Family Winery has a deserved reputation for high quality and consistency. **2005 Hartford Family Winery Land's Edge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$45). *This wine is from an estate vineyard in Annapolis along the true Sonoma Coast, often harvested as late as November. The nose is replete with crushed cherries and toast. Tangy red cherry flavors with a little dark caramel note last forever. Perfectly fine.* The wines are sold primarily through a mailing list and at the winery's tasting room in Forestville. Website: www.hartfordwines.com. 800-588-0234.



Heintz Heintz is perhaps better known for the fine Chardonnays (Derbes, DuMol, Freeman, Flowers, L'Angevin, La Crema, Landmark, Liocco, Littorai, Salinia, Suacci/Carciere, Williams Selyem, and Vyeniello) produced from the Heintz Ranch Vineyard in the hills above Occidental in the Sonoma Coast. 25 acres of Chardonnay were planted in 1982, 22 acres of Pinot Noir in 1996, and 3 acres of Syrah in 2002. There are two labels: Dutch Bill Creek Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and Heintz Pinot Noir, Syrah and Chardonnay. The Heintz wines are ultra-premium and produced in quantities of 50-80 cases. The wines are highly-sought-after (2004 and 2005 vintages of the Heintz wines are sold out) and available only through a mailing list. **2005 Heintz Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** A 'Wine Gone Wild' with plenty of exotic, deep and dark fruit, musk and earthiness. Plenty of structure to age. Website: www.dutchbillwinery.com. 707-874-3852.



Inman Family Wines Kathleen and Simon Inman farm a vineyard planted to Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris on Olivet Road in the Russian River Valley (Olivet Grange Vineyard). Kathleen is also the winemaker and shows a gentle touch with Pinot Noir. **2005 Olivet Grange Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$45, unreleased). *Perfumed with floral and cherry notes, enhanced with deft use of oak, this wine is rich, round and sweet. Finesse trumps over fruit heaviness.* The 2006 rosé (Endless Crush) is quite good as well. The wines are sold primarily to an eager mailing list but there is some retail distribution. Website: www.inmanfamilywines.com. 707-395-0689.



J Vineyards & Winery Winemaker George Bursick, formerly at Ferrari-Carano Winery, has been brought in to position J as a world-class producer of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Since joining J in 2006, he has cut back on yields, upgraded viticulture programs in the estate vineyards, and even acquired six very rare yeast strains from Burgundy that have not been used since the 1930s. Currently J has 8 vineyards totaling over 274 planted acres in the Russian River Valley with great diversity including 9 rootstocks and 15 clones of Pinot Noir. J has always produced superb sparkling wine and Pinot Gris, but the Pinot Noirs



have not reached the upper echelon of producers in California. **2005 J Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.** *A sultry nose featuring toast and tobacco. Elegant and light in weight, the sweet cherry flavors are highlighted by herbs and toasted oak.* Look for future releases made by Bursick including vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs from Robert Thomas Vineyard and Nicole's Vineyard. Website: www.jwine.com. 707-431-5400.

Kanzler Vineyards Stephen and Lynda Kanzler planted this vineyard in 1996. Located near Sebastopol in Sonoma County, the 20 acres sits on the site of an old apple orchard. Clones 115, 667 and Pommard are planted on Goldridge soils. In 2004, winemaker Greg Stach was signed on to produce an estate bottled Pinot Noir. The name should be familiar with pinoaficionados, since one of the highest scoring California Pinot Noirs ever was a Kosta Browne Kanzler Vineyard Pinot



Noir. **2005 Kanzler Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$40) *Very deep ruby color. Bright plum, black berries and herbs in the nose. Soft dark fruit flavors are enhanced by a plush mouth feel. A big tiger with a pussycat sensibility. Alcohol is 14.9% but it never peaks out.* Website: www.kanzlervineyard.com. 707-824-1726.

Ketcham Estate Partners in Pinot Mark Ketcham and Steve Rgisich have given winemaker Michael Browne (Kosta Browne) another outlet for his love of punching down. Ketcham is an ex-computer guy turned Ferrari racer turned Bordeaux geek turned Pinotophile. Rgisich is an ex-engineer and the mind behind Pinot Days. *Plenty of toasty oak and hints of dark chocolate in the nose. Dark cherries tinged with oak in the lengthy finish. In the Michael Browne style with a tad more restraint.* Website: www.ketchamestate.com. 415-408-3360.

Lane Tanner Winery The "Pinot Czarina" crafts Pinot Noirs from the Central Coast and has one of the oldest blocks in the famed Bien Nacido Vineyard. She picks earlier than many and produces Pinot Noir in a restrained and elegant style that is very food-friendly. **2005 Lane Tanner Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** (\$30). *This wine won't bowl you over with fruitiness but offers impeccable balance and fine-grained tannins. The wine is uplifted with bright acidity and is refreshing to drink.* The wines are sold primarily through a mailing list. Website: www.lanetanner.com. 805-929-1826.



Le Cadeau Vineyard Tom and Deb Mortimer purchased 26 acres in the Dundee Hills in 1996 and planted a vineyard to Pinot Noir. The approach here is unique: three different blocks of the vineyard are vinified by three different prominent Oregon winemakers. Cote Est is made by Josh Bergstrom, Rocheux by Harry Peterson-Nedry and Mike Eyres of Chehalem, and Diversite by Cheryl and Sam Francis-Tannahill. Each wine has the winemaker's stamp and represents a different expression of the vineyard. **2005 Le Cadeau Vineyard Cote Est Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** *Of the three, this one is the most fruit-forward and flashy. Pinot Noirs from this vineyard are long and intense with interesting dark fruit, mushroom and baking spice flavors. The texture here is soft, silky and sexy.* Production is limited and the 2005 wines should be available soon. Website: www.lecadeauvineyard.com. 612-799-8969.



Native9 Wine James Ontiveros farms the 8-acre Rancho Ontiveros Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley, and together with winemaker Paul Wilkins, produces small amounts of Native9 Pinot Noir. **2005 Native9 Rancho Ontiveros Vineyards Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** (\$52). *I have tasted the 2004 and 2005 vintages several times and the wines always leave a smile on my face. Like a boysenberry cobbler just out of the oven, this wine alerts your taste buds. A ripe style with fruit to spare, it is long and plush with coating tannins. The addition of stems, which varies with the vintage, gives the wine structure and interest.* The wine is sold through a mailing list. Website: www.native9wine.com. 805-937-1991.



Pellegrini Family Vineyards Bob Pellegrini owns one of the Russian River Valley's heritage vineyards, Olivet Lane Vineyard. He now keeps most of the fruit for himself and with winemaker Kevin Hamel produces a consistently excellent Olivet Lane Pinot Noir. **2005 Olivet lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$30) *This is a fine go-to Pinot Noir that is often priced several dollars less than suggested retail. The wine is not over-bearing or tiresome to drink and compliments food nicely. The cherry fruit is of great breeding and the ethereal style is appealing.* Available in sizeable quantities through retail channels. Website: www.pellegrinisonoma.com. 650-761-2811. Bob produces a number of other very good wines including a old vine zinfandel from a vineyard next door to Olivet Lane Vineyard (photo - huge Zin clusters in October).



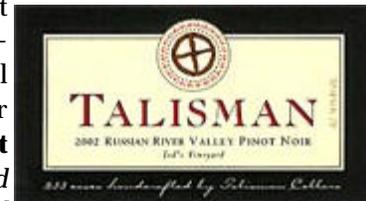
Scherrer Winery For nearly 20 years, Fred Scherrer has been vinifying Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast. He was the winemaker at Dehlinger Winery for several years before striking out on his own. His winemaking guidelines for Pinot Noir are: "Be patient. Let the fruit speak. Listen. Touch lightly. Watch closely. Listen." This formula has worked well for him and his wines are sold to an enthusiastic mailing list. Fred is not big on publicity or marketing. His fans have been trying to talk him into updating his label to something more hip and flashy. If you meet Fred, you will understand his passion for winemaking supercedes any need for notoriety. He finally succumbed to

the pressure and had a new modern label created. The old label (left) emphasized the varietal within, the new label puts Fred's name front and center. Be assured, Fred will not let it go to his head.



2004 Scherrer Winery Sonoma County Pinot Noir (730 cases, \$24). *Rhubarb, red cherry and toast in the nose, red fruits, cola and root beer on the palate. Nice little kick of spice on the back end.* **2004 Scherrer Winery Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (800 cases, \$26) *Woodsy aromatics featuring mushrooms and wet earth, and flavors of black berries and spice.* Website: www.scherrerwinery.com. 707-823-8980.

Talisman Cellars Owner and winemaker Scott Rich loves to seek out vineyards that are climatically and geographically on the edge of viticulture sensibility. He honed his skills making wine at Etude for several years. His wines are built to age and are unique expressions of their terroir. **2004 Talisman Ted's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$46). *Light in color but packing plenty of punch. Dark cherry and mushroom in the nose with lovely cherry fruit and a hint of oak, earth and vanilla in the flavors and finish. Light touch. Brisk acidity leaves a clean impression.* Website: www.talismanwine.com. 707-258-5722.



Vinfolio Vinfolio is owned by Steve Bachmann and is located in San Francisco. They provide wine enthusiasts with a source of ultra-premium wines and also offer assistance in managing cellars and selling wines for collectors who have accumulated far too many bottles (sound familiar?) I include them here because they were pouring several excellent wines including the **2006 Robert Sinskey Vin Gris de Pinot Noir** (13.9% alc., \$19). Rosé has become quite popular and highly touted in the recent wine press. I think it is a superb aperitif in the summer as well as an excellent barbecue wine. Served chilled, it is refreshing and uplifting while higher alcohol Pinot Noir wines, for example, often taste alcoholic and overbearing in the summer heat. *I felt the Sinskey wine was the best Pinot Noir-based rosé that I tasted this year (I have tried over 30 from California alone). The wine is whole cluster pressed. It is presented in a nice Alsatian-styled bottle. Light persimmon in color. Very charming nose of strawberry, watermelon, and rhubarb. The strawberry and citrus flavors are complimented by refreshing acidity. A lighter-styled rosé with great charm.* Website: www.vinfolio.com.



Felton Road Under Snow

A friend and avid reader of the *PinotFile*, Jeffrey Bragman, forwarded these recent surrealistic photographs of the Felton Road Vineyard in Central Otago, New Zealand. Jeffrey is a Californian with a love for New Zealand and is an avid supporter of the semi-annual Central Otago Pinot Noir Celebration (January 25,26, 2008 in Queenstown, New Zealand, www.pinotcelebration.co.nz). You will recognize him at Pinot Noir events by his brightly colored shirts. He loves to talk Pinot.






PrinceofPinot.com

Next Week: Report on the recent IPNC in McMinnville, Oregon. That's worth celebrating. A preview is posted at www.graperadio.com this week.

If Pinot Noir is the next best thing to sex - you must be having really good sex.

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Check out my interview with Ted Lemon of Littorai posted this week at www.graperadio.com. Ted is not as well known as many more visible winemakers, but his wines are consistently superb and are benchmarks for California Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.



Could it Be - Pinot in Plastic?

First came the banishment of health claims on wine bottles, then came screwtops and plastic corks. Now comes word that producers are threatening to replace glass bottles with plastic ones. Is anything left that is sacred when it comes to wine?

Promoters of plastic bottles (made from recycled PET) point out that they weigh less than glass bottles, they are easier to transport, they bounce instead of break when dropped on the floor (when is the last time to dropped a wine bottle - for me it has happened once or twice in my lifetime), and less energy and carbon dioxide emissions are required to make them (true).

Pinot Noir and Chardonnay have been introduced in plastic bottles by French producer Boisset. Aussies Wolf Blass, Hardy's and Palandri have jumped aboard with other varietals. The UK's Sainsbury market chain is pushing a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and Australian Shiraz as well as two Wolf Blass wines all packaged in a plastic bottle.

Supposedly the plastic does not compromise the wine inside in any way, but this is not been fully proven. It would appear that the market for plastic bottles is cheap wines intended for picnics, barbecues and parties at the beach or around the pool - the types of wines that have a short shelf life and are consumed shortly after purchase.

They will have to drag me kicking and screaming or at least gagging if I am forced to drink Pinot Noir from a plastic bottle. Heck, even beer drinkers insist on glass or aluminum. Coke drinkers have long claimed that the cola tastes best bottled in glass. Pinot in plastic could be the end of civilization as we know it.