



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 7, Issue 16 April 16, 2009

*Pinot Noir
makes you think
inside the barrel*

Pinot Noir From the Front Lines

Each year the Pinot Noir festival season on the Pacific Coast kicks off in early March with the World of Pinot Noir in Shell Beach, California and ends in November with the ¡Salud! Oregon Wine Auction in the Willamette Valley. Pinot geeks can revel in thirteen major celebrations in succession including Pinot Paradise in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Pigs and Pinot in Healdsburg, Pinot Summit in Northern California, Petaluma Spring Pinot Noir Spectacular, Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival, Carneros Heritage Fest, Pinot & Paella in Paso Robles, Marin County Pinot Noir Festival, Pinot Days in San Francisco and Chicago, International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville, Oregon, and Pinot on the River in the Russian River Valley. There are numerous other smaller-scaled events in California and Oregon as well. No other wine variety has more than one big event in its honor and varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc have none.

To really feel the pulse of Pinot Noir and become indoctrinated into the Pinot Noir fraternity, you must participate in the joy and conviviality of at least one of these annual Pinot Noir festivals. These events are a unique opportunity to rub shoulders with the passionate men and women who daily toil to produce the world's most sensual wine. The harsh reality is that growing and crafting Pinot Noir is expensive and profits are small. The majority of producers are not in it for the money. As Oregon winemaker Rob Stuart has said, "Pinot Noir is all about a passion and a lifestyle. It's not about money." At one Pinot Noir festival I saw a tee shirt with the inscription across the front, "It's all about the money." The word money had been crossed out and the word Pinot inserted.

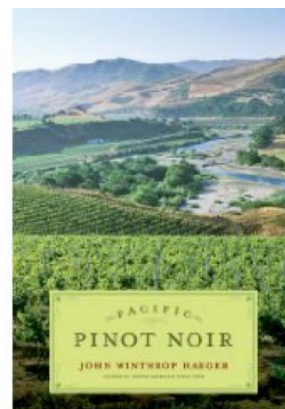


I attend nearly all the major celebrations annually and recently returned from three such events: World of Pinot Noir, Pinot Paradise and Pinot Summit. In the following pages I report my impressions and discoveries. These events are generally raucous affairs and enthusiastic throngs prevent any serious geeky Pinot Noir tasting. However, general impressions are obtained, new ideas and trends are identified, old friendships are renewed and new friendships blossom from the spirit of camaraderie. At the end of the day, staring at your purple-stained fingers, you can feel perfectly content, grinning as you savor the dreamy wines from the recesses of your day's memory.

The 9th Annual World of Pinot Noir

A dedicated herd of Pinot Geeks made the pilgrimage to the 9th Annual World of Pinot Noir at The Cliffs Resort in Shell Beach (Central Coast), California. Mike Sinor, owner and winemaker at Sinor-LaVallee, was the man directing the show and his charge, including Event Coordinator Felicia Montemayor, put on a memorable event. This celebration is under publicized, but it is the equivalent of Woodstock for pinotphiles.

The event kicked off on Friday morning with John Haeger's "**Pinot Noir Primer.**" John is one of the most knowledgeable sources of information on North American Pinot Noir and he always delivers this insightful talk with aplomb. Several facts were of interest. The first Pinot Noir vine dates to the period between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD from a single mother vine in Burgundy or close to Burgundy. The Cote d'Or plantings came later. No wine grape disease or pestilence appeared until the 19th century. United States vineyard acreage grew from 301,000 acres to 399,000 acres between 1990 and 2005, an increase of +33%. During this time span, vineyard acreage increased +283% in Australia, +400% in New Zealand and +59% in Chile. Vineyard acreage worldwide increased about +5% over this fifteen year period. Pinot Noir makes up 2% of the worldwide vineyard acreage and 1.1% of worldwide wine production. In 2006, there were 176,000 acres of Pinot Noir worldwide divided among the following countries: France - 70,148 acres, USA - 34,285 acres, Germany - 29,163 acres, New Zealand - 10,969 acres, Australia - 10,948 acres, Switzerland - 10,003 acres, followed by Argentina, Chile and Italy. The plantings of Pinot Noir have tripled since 1958. The largest plantings of Pinot Noir in France are in Champagne followed in order by Burgundy, Loire, Alsace and Languedoc. Since Burgundian negotiants are clamoring for more sources of Pinot Noir, there are large amounts of vineyards being planted to Pinot Noir in the Languedoc region of France. Very geeky information and highly interesting.



Three regional seminars followed featuring California's Santa Cruz Mountains, New Zealand and Austria. I attended the **Santa Cruz Mountains Seminar** which was repeated in part at Pinot Paradise in April (refer to coverage of Pinot Paradise later in this issue).

The highlight of the World of Pinot Noir is always the **Featured Burgundian Seminar** conducted by noted Burgundy authority, Allen Meadows. This year the seminar featured the wines of **Domaine Henri Gouges** which is located in Nuits-St-Georges. Several points were emphasized during this tasting:

Henri Gouges is an important figure in the history of Burgundy. Along with Marquis D'Angerville, he waged war against fraud in Burgundy in the 1920s and in the 1930s he helped delineate the crus in Burgundy for the *Institut National d'Appellation d'Origine* and challenged the negotiants by bottling his wine at the Domaine and selling it directly to the public. The first bottles were sold in 1933.

The Domaine's 35-acre vineyard holdings are entirely within the commune of Nuits-St-Georges and include both Village appellation land and six Premier Crus. The average age of the vines is 35 years. One Premier Cru, the 2.5 acre Les Saint-Georges, is considered by many to be the equivalent of a Grand Cru. Several Nuits-St-Georges area producers have petitioned the French appellations institute (INAO) to reconsider upgrading the 19-acre Les Saint-Georges vineyard to Grand Cru status. Stymied by local politics, the process could take years.

The Domaine dates to 1919 and the third generation is now in control, specifically Henri Gouges' two grandsons, Pierre and Christian. It was Pierre who attended the World of Pinot Noir along with his sister, Françoise, who sells barrels for Tonnellerie Sirugue here in California.

The Domaine makes a tiny amount of white Nuits-St-Georges from a white mutant of Pinot Noir termed "Pinot Gouges" (La Perrière Blanc).

The winemaking employs some stems, traditional vinification in lined cement vats and maturation 18 to months in 15% to 20% new French oak barrels. The wines are fined with egg whites and lightly filtered before bottling.

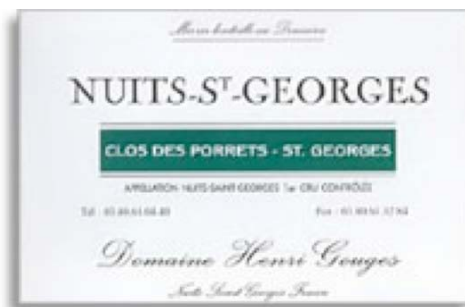
The red wines have considerable natural structure or muscle and the tannins are formidable in the more recent vintages. With the appropriate hearty foods, however, the wines are magical.

My tasting notes on the wines that were very generously provided by Pierre Gouges (pictured below on the right with Allen Meadows) follow below. Listen to the seminar:

2003 Domaine Henri Gouges La Perrière Blanc <2,500 bottles, \$89. *A delightful wine fragrant with butter, toast, and lime exhibiting flavors of honey, butter and white stone fruits with attractive minerality and a refreshing acid lift on the clean finish.*

2006 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Chaînes Carteaux *A lighter styled wine with tasty flavors of dark stone fruits, roasted nuts and herbs embellished with fine tannins.*

2006 Domaine Henri Gouges Clos des Porrets Saint Georges *Lovely dark Pinot fruits accented with cola and game with a generous tannin structure.*



2005 Domaine Henri Gouges Clos des Porrets Saint Georges *More approachable than the 2006 vintage with less aggressive tannins. Plentiful but reserved dark berry and cherry fruits with a note of citric peel on the finish.*

2006 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Saint Georges *The four vintages tasted from this vineyard all had significant tannins and were hard to cozy up to without food. Bright blackberry fruit aromas with a plush fruit core accented with tar, earth and coffee and an endless finish. Currently the tannins overwhelm the fruit.*

2004 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Saint Georges *Prodigious and chewy dark fruit core highlighting plum flavors with a touch of grassiness and greenness typical of many 2004 red Burgundies at present.*

2001 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Saint Georges *Dark stone fruits and blackberries with flamboyant tannins and lively acidity on the long finish featuring aromatic grapefruit peel.*



1993 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Saint Georges *Similar to the 2001 vintage but a little more mellow and refined at this stage. Still explicitly tannic but the beautiful dark fruit core has started to come to the forefront.*

2002 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Vaucrains *A “linebacker” of a wine that is typically austere in its youth. A rustic wine with full and flashy aromas, including some forest floor and savage, sporting plentiful tannins and a citrus kick on the lively finish.*

1999 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Vaucrains *A lighter dark fruit load compared to the 2002 vintage showing a hint of heat in the nose and in the dry finish.*

1970 Domaine Henri Gouges Les Pruliers *A less-heralded vintage but a delightful wine. Orange-brown in color, lightly fruited with secondary notes of old book, leather, cigar box, toast and brioche with no noticeable tannins and lively acidity on the finish.*

There are two **Featured Tastings** held in the WOPN event tents on the bluffs, each accompanied by a silent auction of magnums, light hors d’oeuvres and a magnificent selection of cheeses from The Cheese Shop in Carmel (below).

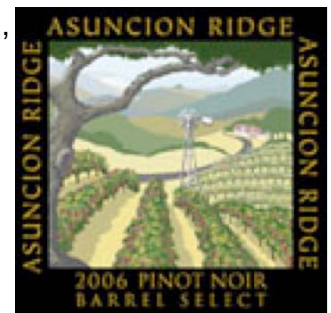


I counted approximately 239 wineries pouring at the two walk-around tastings. With so many wineries and wines, it is impossible to sample them all. The Kosta Browne stampede is always amazing. The top photo on the left below shows Dan Kosta and Michael Browne setting up their pouring station which included all of their 2006 single vineyard Pinot Noirs. This photo was shot at 1:50 PM, 10 minutes before the tent opened to the attendees. The bottom two photos show the throngs of people five deep at the Kosta Browne booth at 2:10 PM. There is no other winery at the event that generates this kind of buzz and following. Michael and Dan are generous supporters of the Pinot community and they deserve all the accolades and attention that follows them around the wine circuit.



Here are a few wines I sampled that stood out for me and are worthy of your attention. The 2007 vintage in California is highly touted and for good reason. Buy everything you can afford from this vintage. The 2007 vintage in Oregon has been degraded by some wine critics but I find many of the wines from accomplished producers to be superb.

2007 Asuncion Ridge Vineyards Barrel Select Paso Robles Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., unreleased. Philip Krumal crafts small amounts of Pinot Noir from his isolated estate vineyard located at 2,000 feet above sea level in the Atascadero hills. *Lovely floral aromas complimented by red fruits and a hint of oak. Middle-weighted red Pinot fruits nicely spiced and oaked. Everything works in harmony for pure pleasure.*



2007 Benovia Winery Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$45. Winemaker Mike Sullivan is right on his game and I have yet to taste a better Sonoma Coast appellation wine from this vintage. Required drinking for pinotphiles.

2007 Black Ridge Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$37. A new face on the block in the mountains spearheaded by accomplished winemaker Bill Brosseau. The inaugural 2006 vintage was fine but this is a step up in gratification.

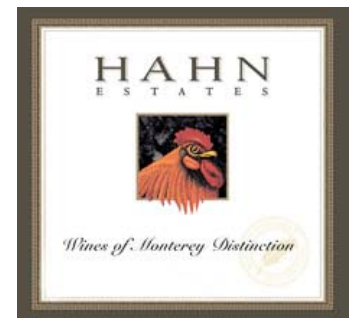
2007 Drew Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Jason Drew crafts exquisite Pinot Noirs from his small winery in the town of Elk in the hills above Anderson Valley. I have touted the wines recently and Drew has received considerable additional accolades in the wine press. See full report on this wine later in an upcoming issue of the *PinotFile*.



2007 Failla Vivian Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., unreleased. Founded in 1998, Failla is the project of winemaker Ehren Jordan and his wife Anne-Marie Failla. Jordan has a distinguished history of winemaking at Neyers Vineyards and Turley Wine Cellars. His Pinot Noirs, which are sourced from prime California coastal vineyards, have been superb of late. *The nose is light, airy and slightly grassy. Tasty and intense boysenberry core with lively acidity on a lingering finish.*

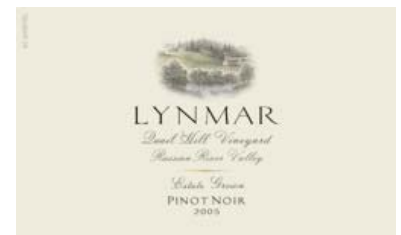
2006 Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard Ashley's Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir \$48. Blair Fox leads a winemaking team that is producing world class Pinot Noir from superb vineyard sources in Santa Barbara County. Three generations of the Parker family are dedicated to uncompromising quality.

2006 Hahn Estates SLH Estate Pinot Noir. Winemaker Paul Clifton looks like my 30 year-old son (Paul is 40) but don't let that fool you. Hahn owns all of their own vineyards (650 acres) and thus is able to produce outstanding Pinot Noirs at exceptionally reasonable prices. The value-priced Hahn Monterey Pinot Noir (retails for \$23 but often found for less than \$20) is the best California Pinot Noir in its price class year in and year out. The 2006 vintage was selected Best Pinot Noir and Best of Class at Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition. The SLH Estate is a step-up in quality and price and very good. The SLH wines are produced completely in the Santa Lucia Highlands, from the ground to the barrel to the bottle at Hahn Winery. The Lucienne high-end premium Pinot Noirs (\$35 to \$45) are really classy and one of my favs at this year's Pinot Summit. Great juice here.



2006 Lucienne Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Refer to the write up on Lucienne wines later in this issue.

2006 Lynmar Quail Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.35% alc., 1,419 cases, \$60. It's not but this Pinot Noir from Lynmar's 47-acre Quail Hill Vineyard crafted by Hugh Chapelle is quintessential Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Aged 16 months in 45% new French Oak. Dr. Dirt (Greg Adams) is the consulting viticulturist. Everything is first class here. *Classic Russian River nose of red cherries and raspberries, baking spice and cola. The flavors echo the aromas with a deft touch of oak. The tannins are fine grained and the lively acidity creates a refreshing and memorable finish. Good to go for another 4 to 5 years.*



2006 Kawarau Reserve Central Otago Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$26.10. Winemaker Dean Shaw is an unmistakable character with a droll sense of humor. He is a partner in the Central Otago Wine Co., which provides contract winemaking for several local producers. Harvested from old vines, 25% whole bunch pressed, wild yeast fermentation, aged 10 months in 25% new French oak, minimal fining and filtration. This wine left a very favorable impression on me. I will review this Pinot Noir and a number of others from the Central Otago Wine Co. in subsequent issue of the *PinotFile*.

2006 Mount Eden Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$48. It is good to see Jeffrey Patterson leave his viticultural perch at Mount Eden and pour his superb wines. Patterson has been crafting the wines here since 1981. Mount Eden is the longest estate producer of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the country. Low yields, dry farming, natural fermentations, no filtering or fining. A California classic.

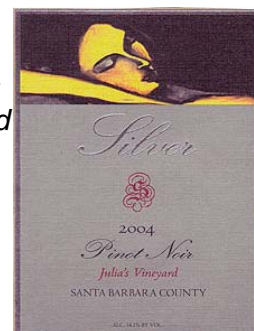
2007 Papapietro Perry Winery Clone 777 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Unreleased. An interesting blend of Dijon clone 777 grapes from several vineyards showing great nuance and complexity. This winery is at the top of its game. Look for a report on the entire lineup of 2007 wines from Papapietro Perry in the next issue of the *PinotFile*.



2006 Pillow Rd. Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$47. Two vineyard plots located in Sebastopol on the southern edge of the Russian River Valley farmed by the Stotesbery family. 20 acres of Pinot Noir planted to multiple clones including Pommard 4, Dijon 115 and 777, and Swan and Calera selections. *Attractive aromas of cherries, spice and cola. Middle-weighted cherry flavors with a deft touch of oak which lingers on the finish. Admirable t n' a. Not exceptional but solid.*

2007 Roessler Cellars Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir \$48. One of many outstanding vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs sourced from multiple appellations in California. Roessler Cellars now releases 13 different Pinot Noirs. Roessler is a producer you can bank on.

2005 Silver Wines Julia's Vineyard Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$45. Founded in 2000 the producer only bottles single vineyard Pinot Noirs from northern Santa Barbara County. *Complex and intriguing nose of black cherries, sage, oak toast and a hint of smoke. Rich and plush flavors of black cherries, blackberries and blueberries augmented with prominent oak. All silk and satin in the mouth with bright acidity on the back end. The wine picks up interest in the glass, becoming better and better with airtime. Very Caliesque.*



2007 Sojourn Cellars Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir A Fall release. Craig and Erich Bradley have taken Sojourn to the next level with the release of their 2007 lineup of Pinot Noirs. They have expanded their vineyard-designate offerings with this vintage and this bottling represents the best of an outstanding lineup of Pinot Noirs. The Demuth Vineyard has quietly become one of California's Grand Cru level Pinot Noir vineyards. The 2007 Sojourn Cellars Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir was also quite good.

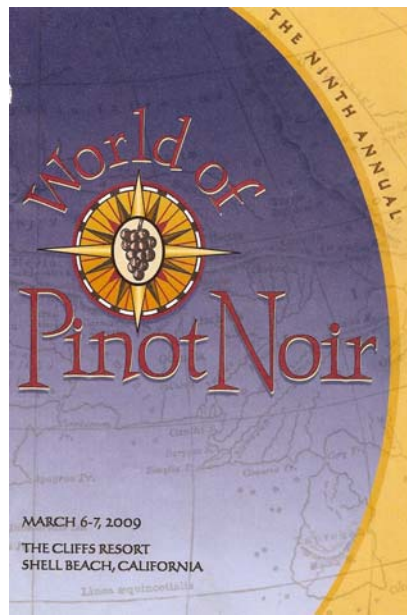


2007 Thomas Fogarty Winery & Vineyards Rapley Trail Block M Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., \$75. This winery pioneered cool climate grape growing in the Skyline sub-region of the Santa Cruz Mountains when, in 1978, Dr. Thomas Fogarty was the first to plant on Skyline Ridge, some 2,000 feet above sea level. *This is a superb wine in every way. I have now tasted it multiple times and have found it consistently great. The nose pulls you in with scents of ripe berry fruits, baking spice and roses. A juicy and delicious berry core saturates the palate and leaves a lasting impression. The tannins are fine-grained and the acidity spot on. Great bones here.*

2007 Twomey Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$50, unreleased. This Westside Road winery was founded in 1999 by the Duncan Family, founders of Silver Oak. This Pinot Noir comes from the winery's West Pin Vineyard planted to a mix of Dijon, Pommard and Martini clones and a vineyard in Forestville planted to Dijon 115 and 777, Pommard, Swan, Calera, Mt. Eden and 420A clones. *Flamboyant and precocious for a 2007 vintage wine. Intense boysenberry and black cherry fruit with almost chewy density that persists on the finish like the memory of a luscious kiss. Plentiful grip and tannins to offset the fruit.*



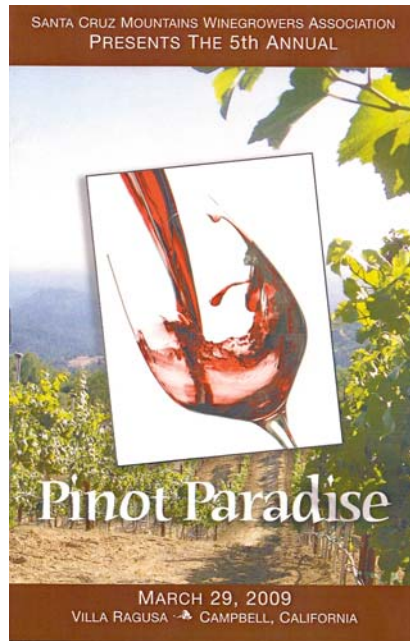
World of Pinot Noir: check it out at www.wopn.com.



Pinot Paradise

“This grape among all grapes wants to become wine”
Jeffrey Patterson, Mount Eden Vineyards

Of all the Pinot Noir growing appellations of California, the Santa Cruz Mountains receives the least respect and notoriety despite its heritage as the birthplace of Pinot Noir in North America. The reality is that this region is undergoing a remarkable renaissance and the small amount of Pinot Noir originating from this appellation is much better than you might realize. In cooperation with Appellation America, the Santa Cruz Mountains has made a major marketing push to bring awareness to the region's superb wines. Production is still small (there are only about 800 acres of Pinot Noir planted in the Santa Cruz Mountains) and the wines are often snapped up by locals. As a result, the distant populace in the United States has not discovered these Pinot Noir gems. To complicate matters, some notable producers in the Santa Cruz Mountains also source grapes from outside the appellation and feature wines from other more notable California appellations. Recent extensive tastings of Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noirs have led to the identification of six sub-regions which seem to have distinctive aromatic and flavor profiles. A seminar on these evolving sub-regions was held at the World of Pinot Noir and at this year's Pinot Paradise. To listen to this year's Pinot Paradise Technical Seminar (which includes introductory remarks on the Santa Cruz Mountains by Jim Schultze of Windy Oaks Vineyards & Winery, a talk on contrasts between Burgundy and the Santa Cruz Mountains by Joe Miller, PhD, University of California Santa Cruz, and a discussion of the newly identified subregions of the Santa Cruz Mountains by Clark Smith, Director of Appellation Tastings at Appellation America)



The Google map on the following page shows the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA, its subregions (in yellow print) and major Pinot Noir vineyards. This map was developed by Mary Lindsay, President of the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains and Prudy Foxx, a well-known viticulturist in the Santa Cruz Mountains who manages over 600 hundred acres of vineyards. The vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains are small and isolated creating a formula for uniqueness in the wines.

35 wineries that produce Pinot Noir participated in this year's Fifth Annual Pinot Paradise sponsored by the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association. Clos de Tech, David Bruce Winery, Mountain Winery, Rhys Vineyards, Salamandre, Testarossa and Varner Wines are also in the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation but did not take part. A list of the wineries at Pinot Paradise and the Pinot Noirs they produce from the six subregions:

Skyline

Kings Mountain Winery (Estate)
Thomas Fogarty Winery (Estate)
Woodside Vineyards (Estate)

Summit Road

Byington Winery (Estate)

Burrell School (Estate)

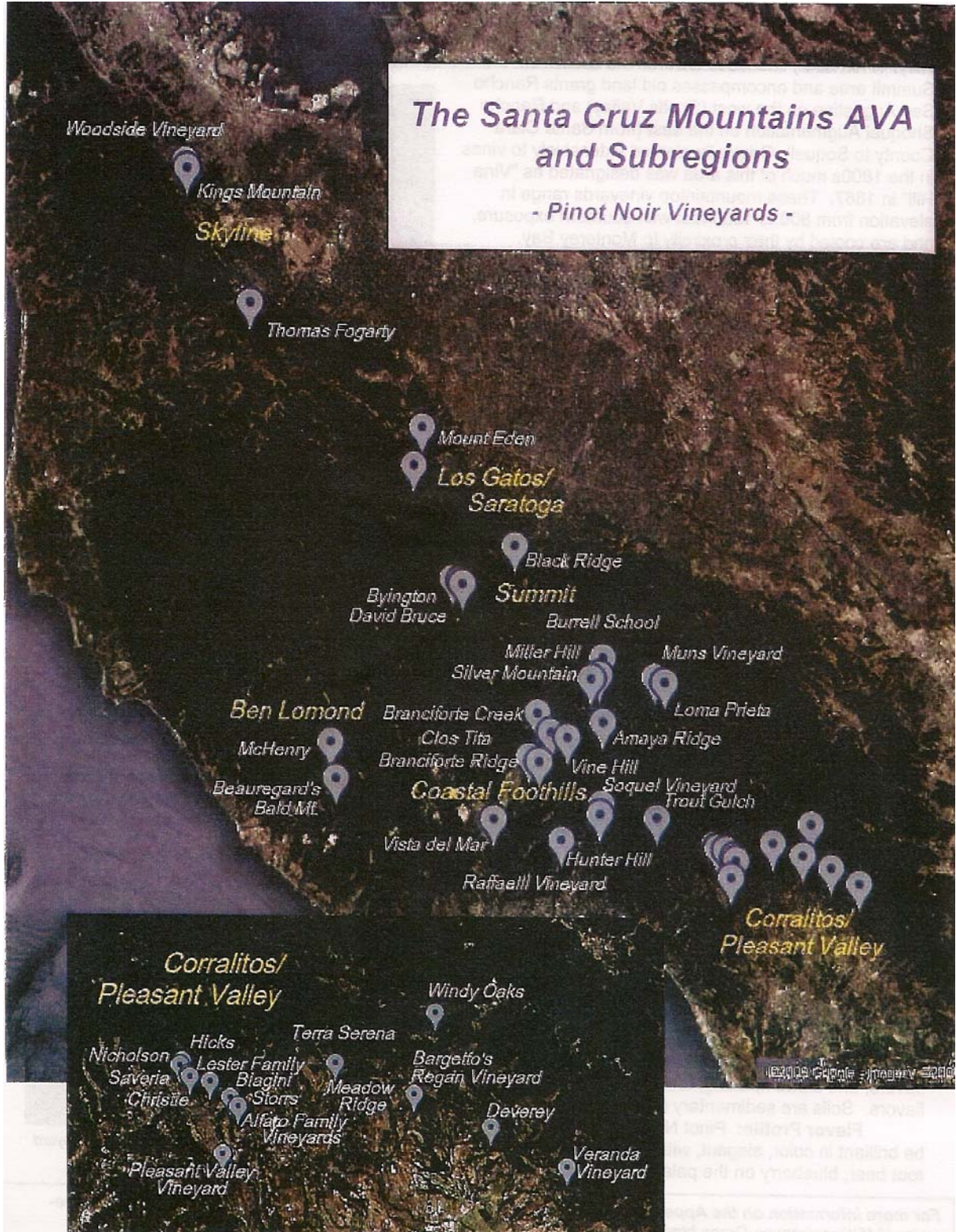
Loma Prieta (Estate)

Muccigrosso Vineyards (Estate)

Silver Mountain (Muns Vineyard, Miller Hill Vineyard)

Sonnet Wine Cellars (Muns Vineyard)

Trout Gulch Vineyards (Amaya Ridge Vineyard)



Coastal Foothills

Beauregard Vineyards (Trout Gulch Vineyard)
Big Basin Vineyards (Branciforte Ridge)
Clos Tita (Estate)
Hallcrest Vineyards (Vista Del Mare Vineyard)
Heart O' The Mountain (Estate)
Hunter Hill Vineyards & Winery (Estate)
Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard (Branciforte Creek Vineyard, Branciforte Ridge Vineyard)
Wines of Vine Hill (Estate, Raffaelli Vineyard)

Ben Lomond Mountain

Beauregard Vineyards (Bald Mountain Vineyard)
McHenry Vineyards (Estate)

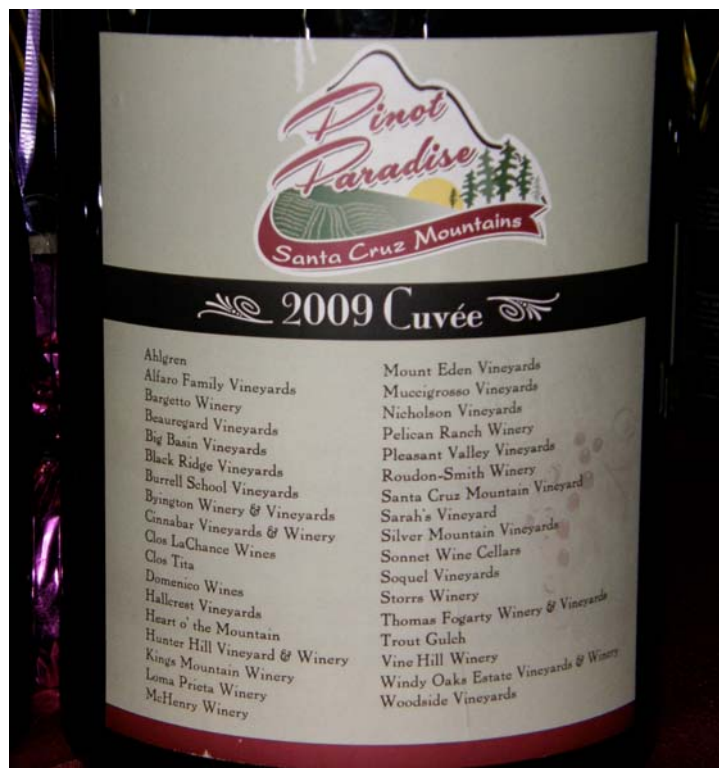
Saratoga/Los Gatos

Black Ridge Vineyards (Estate)
Cinnabar (Estate)
Mount Eden Vineyards (Estate)

Corralitos/Pleasant Valley

Ahlgren Vineyard (Veranda Vineyard)
Alfaro Family Vineyards (Estate)
Bargetto Winery (Regan Vineyard)
Big Basin Vineyards (Alfaro Family Lindsay Paige Vineyard)
Cinnabar Winery (Lester Family Vineyards)
Clos La Chance (Biagini Vineyard)
Domenico Wines (Deverey Vineyard)
Hallcrest Vineyards (Terra Serena Vineyard)
Loma Prieta Winery (Saveria Vineyard)
Nicholson Vineyards (Estate)
Pelican Ranch Winery (Veranda Vineyard, Remde Vineyard, Deer Park/Lester Family Vineyard)
Pleasant Family Vineyards (Estate, Lester Family Vineyard)
Roudon-Smith Winery (Meadow Ridge Vineyard)
Sarah's Vineyard (Veranda Vineyard)
Soquel Vineyards (Saveria Vineyard, Lester Family Vineyard)
Storrs Winery & Vineyards (Wildcat Ridge Vineyard)
Trout Gulch Vineyards (Regan Vineyard)
Wines of Vine Hill (Hicks Family Vineyard)
Windy Oaks Estate Vineyards & Winery (Estate)

The highlight of Pinot Paradise is the Grand Cruz Tasting held at the Villa Regusa in Campbell California. Nearly all the producers of Pinot Noir in the Santa Cruz Mountains are present proudly pouring their latest releases accompanied by gourmet artisan foods and an auction of 3.0 liter bottlings from each of the participants. In addition, a single Jeroboam containing wine from all the participating wineries is auctioned (photos below). Pinot Paradise is a more intimate event than many, allowing for quality time with the winemakers and winegrowers in attendance.



The Santa Cruz Mountains is home to over 70 wineries, with over 40 producing Pinot Noir. I sampled a number of the 70 Pinot Noirs poured at this event and I have listed below my favorites below. To locate the wines, consult the winery's websites or the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrower's Association website at www.scmwa.com. There is also a Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Only Wine Club worth investigating (www.santacruzwineclub.com). Vinocruz is a wine retail store in downtown Santa Cruz which stocks many of the small production Pinot Noirs produced in the Santa Cruz Mountains (www.vinocruz.com).

As you can see from this list, almost half of the outstanding wines came from the Corralitos/Pleasant Valley subregion. This area is at the southernmost end of the appellation just north of Watsonville. The vineyards are at lower elevations (typically 400 to 800 feet above sea level) and are close to the Pacific Ocean. Early morning fog is common in the summers followed by warm afternoons and evenings and cool night times. The resulting large daily temperature variation during the growing season leads to slow ripening and an extended growing season with vineyards in this subregion usually the last in the appellation to be harvested. Soils here are well-drained sedimentary type (sandy, clay, silt and loam). Most of the vineyards are relatively young and planted to Dijon clones. The Pinot Noirs from this subregion tend to feature dark red fruits with added notes of root beer, blueberry and spice on the palate. Like Pinot Noirs from the Santa Cruz Mountains generally, the wines have impressive minerality and inviting acidity.

2006 Alfaro Family Vineyards Lindsay Paige Vineyard Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noir

2006 and 2007 Black Ridge Vineyards Saratoga/Los Gatos Pinot Noirs

2006 Burrell School Vineyards & Winery Estate Summit Road Pinot Noir

2007 Clos LaChance Wines Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir

2005 Clos Tita Santa Cruz Mountains Cuvée Coastal Foothills Pinot Noir

*****2005 Hallcrest Vineyards Terra Serena Vineyard Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noir**

2005 Hallcrest Vineyards Vista Del Mare Vineyard Coastal Foothills Pinot Noir

2006 Heart O' The Mountain Coastal Foothills Pinot Noir

*****2006 and 2007 Loma Prieta Winery Saveria Vineyard Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noirs**

2006 McHenry Vineyard Swan Clone Ben Lomond Mountain Pinot Noir

*****2006 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Saratoga/Los Gatos Pinot Noir**

2006 Pleasant Valley Vineyards Dylan David Estate Reserve Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noir

*****2007 Pleasant Valley Vineyards Dylan David Lester Family Vineyards Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noir**

2005 Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard "Bailey's" Coastal Foothills Pinot Noir

2006 Silver Mountain Muns Vineyard Summit Road Pinot Noir

2007 Sonnet Wine Cellars Muns Vineyard Summit Road Pinot Noir

*****2007 Thomas Fogarty Estate Rapley Trail Vineyard Block M Skyline Pinot Noir**

*****2007 Trout Gulch Vineyards Amaya Ridge and Regan Vineyards Summit Road and Corralitos Pinot Noir**

2006 Windy Oaks Estate Vineyards & Winery Wild Yeast Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noir

*****2006 Windy Oaks Estate Vineyards & Winery Diane's Block Corralitos/Pleasant Valley Pinot Noir**



2009 Pinot Noir Summit

The Seventh Annual Pinot Noir Shootout is a series of focused tastings by a diverse panel of experts and included 270 Pinot Noirs from around the globe including Canada, Chile, France, Italy, Australia and New Zealand. Stateside, California dominated the wine submissions, but some examples came from Oregon, New York, Michigan and even Idaho. The Pinot Noir Summit is the final showdown, the culmination of the Pinot Noir Shootout. During the series of Shootout tastings, only 32 wines are tasted by the judging panel daily (four flights of eight wines each), allowing the judges to be completely immersed, focused and fair to the submitted wines and eliminating palate fatigue as a factor. The wines are tasted blind without reference to origin, appellation, vintage or price. At the Pinot Noir Summit, the judging panel's top 44 wines are paraded blind for the consumer and press attendees allowing them to compare their findings with the expert panel. The Pinot Summit is the only wine competition in which judges' conclusions are put to the test by an unbiased group of wine lovers. In addition, the preferences of male and female judges and attendees are tabulated separately for comparison. The two genders (not surprisingly) rarely agree on the best wines. The full results of this year's Pinot Noir Summit, held on Sunday, April 5 in San Rafael, California, are posted online at www.affairsofthevine.com.

I blind tasted all 44 Pinot Noir finalists, powering through them in about two and a half hours. Because of the time limitation, my tasting notes are succinct and my recommended wines are based on a brief glimpse of each wine. I have put the wines in four groups according to my personal taste preferences: Excellent (would buy), Good (might buy), Decent (would drink if someone else buys) and The Rest. Remember that these wines are all finalists and represent technically sound wines that at least some members of the judging panel recommended.

Excellent

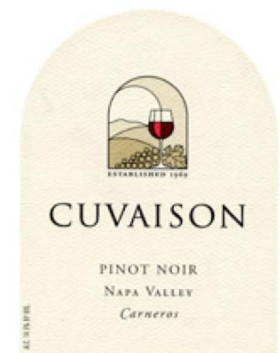
2007 Artesa Winery Limited Release Carneros Pinot Noir 889 cases, \$50. Winemaker Dave Dobson crafted this wine but he has recently departed and has been replaced by Mark Beringer, formerly of Duckhorn. This wine is composed of the most outstanding barrels in the cellar and generally needs time to shed its tannins. *Deep dark reddish-purple color. Appealing aromas of plums, currants and spice. Plush core of earth-kissed dark fruits and sassafras with exotic spices. Less tannic than the 2006 version of this wine with a little more lively acidity.*



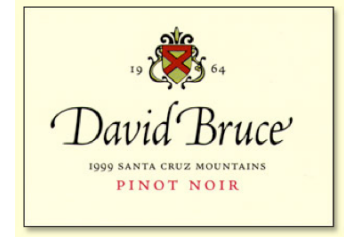
2006 Claiborne & Churchill Twin Creeks Edna Valley Pinot Noir 172 cases, \$40, sold out. A family winery founded in 1983 by Claiborne (Clay) Thompson and Fredericka Churchill Thompson and located in the Edna Valley of California. This producer has gained renown for its Alsatian wine varieties including Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris but Pinot Noir has also become a signature wine. Look for the 2007 edition of this wine which is sold through the Wine Club, Tasting Room and by phone order (805-544-4066). I also sampled the 2007 Edna Valley Pinot Noir (\$26) and it is a killer as well. The winemaker is Coby Parker-Garcia. *Lighter in color and body, this elegant wine has appealing aromas and flavors of red cherries, vanilla and spice. Nothing out of place and no rough edges. Pinotypical.*



2007 Cuvaison Estate Carneros Pinot Noir 5,557 cases, \$30. Cuvaison produces Pinot Noirs exclusively from its 400-acre vineyard in Carneros. The winery has been owned by the Schmidheiny family of Switzerland since 1979. A new winery devoted to Pinot Noir was built in Carneros and completed for the 2004 vintage. A tasting room on site is open by appointment. Steven Rogstad has been the winemaker since 2001 and he has consistently produced masterful Pinot Noirs. He also crafts the Cuvaison Block F5 Pinot Noir, a more intense expression of the winery's Carneros fruit. The wines are available on the website and widely distributed. *Appealing mix of loamy and spiced cherry and berry aromas with impeccable balance. The tannins are silky, the richness is evident but understated, and the whole package drinks smoothly.*



2006 David Bruce Winery Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 10,854 cases, \$42. This historic winery now turns out 60,000 cases of wine a year but still manages to produce consistently fine Pinot Noir sourced from multiple appellations throughout California. Bonded in 1964, the winery uses a unique collaborative approach to winemaking involving David Bruce, a team of winemakers headed by Mitri Faravashi, vineyard manager Greg Stokes and the sales and marketing director. The wines are widely distributed. *A very tasty wine that is black cherry-driven with nicely appointed new oak spice running through. The tannins are fine-grained, the mouth feel is satiny and the lengthy finish is embellished with lively acidity.*



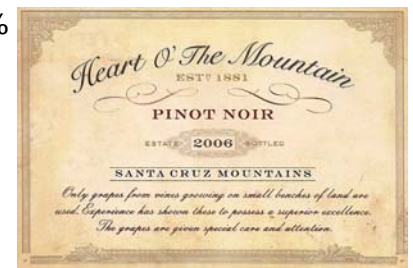
David Bruce is a California Pinot Noir icon. Unlike many physicians who enter wine at or near retirement, Bruce jumped in when he graduated from Stanford Medical School. It was a bottle of Richebourg from France that inspired him to buy 40 acres of land near Los Gatos, California in 1961. He cleared the land by hand, built a small winery and planted 25 acres of vineyards. He did double duty for 25 years, working in his dermatology practice in Santa Clara and spending his free time making wine. He was influenced by Martin Ray, who was a legend in the Santa Cruz Mountains winemaking community.

Bruce instituted many technological advances in California winemaking many of which were learned from his trips to Burgundy. These included small barrel fermentation, whole berry fermentation for red wines, use of French oak barrels, foot punch downs, extended maceration and use of rotary presses. He was one of the first California winemakers to produce a Blanc de Noir, a white Zinfandel and late harvest wines. He became well known for his Petite Sirah.

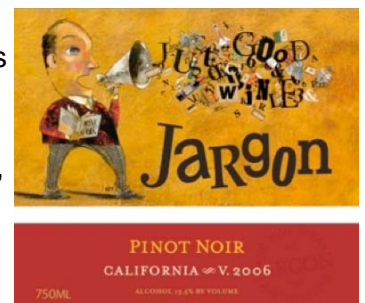
Bruce's early work with Pinot Noir was fraught with difficulties (he called Pinot Noir the *Dune* of winemaking referring to the science fiction novel) but he persisted and his Pinot Noirs eventually earned him an international reputation. He was one of twelve California wineries that participated in the 1976 Judgment of Paris.

For more historical information on David Bruce, consult *The David Bruce Winery: Experimentation, Dedication and Success* (2002 interview), Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley at www.archive.org/details/davidbrucewinery00brucrich.

2006 Heart O' The Mountain Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 500 cases, \$48. This newer winery was extensively reviewed in the *PinotFile* (Volume 7, Issue 14). I have tasted this wine blind twice and on two other occasions with consistent findings. Available only at the winery through a mailing list. *Dark stone fruits and strawberries are featured highlighted with cinnamon spice and oak with a suave texture and nicely balanced t n' a. Beautifully harmonized.*



2007 Jargon California Pinot Noir 30,000 cases, \$10, screw cap. The price is not a misprint. This was a surprising find at the Pinot Noir Summit. The representatives who were pouring the wine were not well informed and the website doesn't reveal much information, but then, that is the whole idea behind this Pinot Noir. Just drink it, don't dissect it! The wine is one of 25 labels of Trinchero Wine Estates, apparently from estate vineyards in Monterey and "the Delta." This is an "anti-snob" wine and the website, www.jargonwines.com, encourages the use of plastic cups.



The name "Jargon" is a stab at the prevalence of pretentious wine-speak, a condition the producers term "jargonitis." The 2006 vintage is widely accessible in retail stores and the 2007 vintage will be more available soon. *This is about as easy going a Pinot Noir as you will ever find. Bright red fruits, juicy and delicious, with a soft and smooth mouth feel and no tannins in sight. Not a nuanced wine and lacks complex aromas and flavors and a lengthy finish but it is a lovable wine that is well-crafted. In simple jargon: a good drink.*

2006 Laetitia Vineyard & Winery Reserve Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 2,200 cases, \$40. This is reliable Central Coast producer of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and sparkling wine who has fared well in past Pinot Summit events. Available now from the winery's website. *Restrained but pleasant dark berry and cherry pie aromas with a healthy core of well-spiced black cherry and blackberry fruit that fans out nicely on the palate and finishes with persistence. Very user-friendly.*



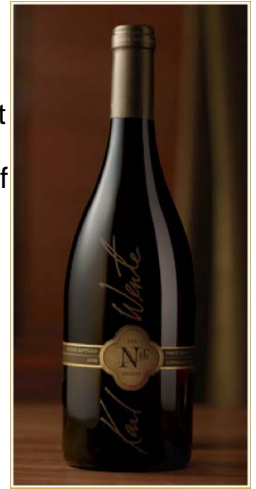
2006 Lucienne Lone Oak Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 217 cases, \$45. This is the high-end label from Hahn Estates in the Santa Lucia Highlands (see feature later in this issue). This wine represents a special selection from small blocks of Lone Oak Vineyard crafted by winemaker Paul Clifton. Aged in 50% new French oak. *This beauty has a vibrant black cherry fruitiness with interesting notes of coffee and leather. Very plush and velvety in the mouth with a fresh, lively and lengthy finish. Evocative and very satisfying.*



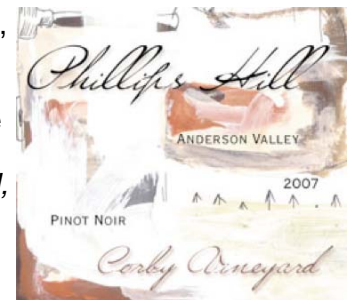
2005 Mayro-Murdick Estate Carneros Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 662 cases, \$36. This wine is crafted by Michael Cox who is also the winemaker at Schug Winery in Carneros. A blend of 80% lund Vineyard (30 year-old vines) and 20% Sangiacomo Tailgrass Vineyard (15 year-old vines). Aged 15 months in 34% in new French oak. *Strawberry red in color. Pleasing aromas of black cherries, berries and grass. Demure flavors of cherries, cranberries and a touch of toasty oak all in harmony with admirable grip on the vibrant finish.*



2006 Nth Degree Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir 500 cases, \$36.95.. The Nth Degree wines are limited production handcrafted wines from Wente Vineyards. Fifth generation winemaker, Karl D. Wente, creates these wines to reflect the terroir of Wente family's Estate Vineyards. The wines are allocated and sold primarily to wine club members with very limited restaurant and retail availability. The Nth Degree Pinot Noir is 95% Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco, Monterey) and 5% Barbera (Livermore Valley). The Pinot Noir was aged 16 months in a combination of French, Eastern European and neutral oak. The Barbera was aged in stainless steel tank (50%) and American oak (50%) for 3 months. Very cool looking package. *I love this wine for its pinotypicity. Delicate dusty red fruits on the nose with a juicy cherry mouth filling attack. Flavors of clove and cola add interest. The tannins are supple and the aromatic finish is endless. I can't say enough good things about this wine.*



2007 Phillips Hill Winery Corby Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 350 cases, \$40. Proprietor and winemaker Toby Hill is making his mark in the Anderson Valley with beautifully crafted and limited production vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs from Mendocino County. Hill is an artist as well and his labels are very eye-catching. The wines are sold through a mailing list wine club and the Phillips Hill tasting room in Philo on Highway 128. *A thoroughly satisfying cherry-driven Pinot that is well-spiced, lightly weighted, with perfect integration of tannins and acid. This wine really shows off the bright and juicy Anderson Valley fruit that pinotphiles love to come home to.*



2007 RN Estate Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir

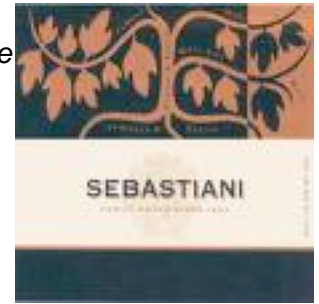
120 cases, \$55. French immigrant Roger left a distinguished career in the restaurant industry to start RN Estate in 2005 in Paso Robles. He crafts a number of varieties including Pinot Noir from Fiddlestix Vineyard in the Santa Rita Hills and Maridel Vineyard in Avila Valley. This wine is composed of Dijon clones 113, 115 and 667. It is aged 12 months in French oak. Nicolas has a gifted touch with Pinot Noir and I have been an admirer since the first release. The wines may be ordered online and are distributed to fine wine shops and restaurants in California. *Floral and confected dark red fruit aromas. Tasty sweet red plum and black cherry flavors matched to toasty oak. Beautifully composed with healthy tannins and admirable restraint. Drinkable now but will benefit from a year in the bottle.*



2007 Seawind Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 75 cases, \$44. Owner and winemaker Ken Dunkley produces artisan Pinot Noirs from bought fruit at CrushPad in San Francisco. Ken began making wine in 1976 while a student at University California Davis and has had a career in fermented foods and drinks. He started his commercial wine venture in 2006 and has already won awards in major wine competitions. Unfortunately he will not have access to this fruit in future vintages. 100% de-stemmed, 25% whole berries, 4-day cold soak, aged in 25% Francois Freres oak barrels for 9 months. Unfined and unfiltered. Sold on the website. *Moderately deep garnet color with a very slight cloudiness. Very sensual aromatics featuring darker fruits and Asian spices. Lushly fruited, mouth filling plum flavors.*



2007 Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery Sonoma County Pinot Noir 27,287 cases, \$18. A Sonoma County Selection. Wide retail distribution. *Slightly cloudy. Lovely nose of bright cherries and berries, sandalwood and stylish spice. Clean and balanced with great purity of fruit, suavely textured, a deft touch of oak, finishing with commendable grip. Amazing quality considering the sizable production level.*



2005 Stag Hollow Winery & Vineyard Reserve Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 170 cases, \$39.95. A blend of 8 Pinot Noir clones. This small, family winery was started in 1994 by Mark Huff and Jill Zarnowitz in Yamhill, Oregon. The 34-acre estate is slowly being planted to vines on steep south-facing slopes of Willakenzie soils at very high density, exceeding 3,000 vines per acre. There are nine clones of Pinot Noir, including 5 Dijon clones. 10 acres of the estate have been designated as a wildlife preserve. The Pinot Noirs have been quite distinctive and praiseworthy. This wine won a Double Gold Medal at the Wine Press Northwest Judging in 2008. The wines are sold on the website and through retail channels. *Dark ruby color. Enticing aromatic profile of black cherries, plum, stems and cedar with a delicious and generous infusion of dark fruited reduction sauce matched to tasty oak. Substantial chewy tannins portend a long life ahead.*



Good

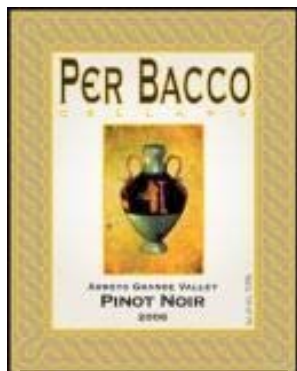
2005 Ampelos Cellars Lambda Sta Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 535 cases, \$35. Available on website. *Ruby color. Perfume of crushed red berries with a touch of smoke. Juicy demure red fruits with supple dry tannins and a tangy lift to the pleasing finish.*

2006 Bargetto Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$25. One of the oldest wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains, established in 1933. This wine is available on the website. *Light garnet in color. Attractive aromas of cherries and baking spice echoed in the flavors with a touch of savory herbs. The spectacular nose trumps the flavors.*

2006 Per Bacco Cellars Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$28. Sourced from Laetitia Vineyard. Aged 12 months in 50% new French oak. Available on the website. *The nose draws you in with scents of bright black cherries and brioche. A mid-weight wine with cherry cola flavors and a deft touch of toasty oak. The dry tannins are caressing and the acidity is in step with the fruit.*

2005 David Bruce Winery Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$42. A very popular wine with both the judging panel and attendees of the Pinot Summit. Winery (call) and retail availability. *Enticing aromas of dark stone fruits nicely accented by spice and cola. Saucy red fruits saturate the mid-palate and dry tannins provide a good backbone. The fruity finish teases but ends a bit short.*

2005 Fort Ross Vineyard Estate Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 513 cases, \$49. Aged 11 months in 40% new French oak. Unfined and unfiltered. Website availability. *Very dark reddish-purple in color. A big wine that attacks the senses with an onslaught of black cherry, baked plum, spice box and peppermint aromas and prodigious dark fruits, clove and tar flavors. Still young and brooding. A little heat peaks out on the finish.*



2005 Halleck Vineyard Hallberg Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 250 cases, \$55. Call winery for availability. *Lighter garnet color. Bright cherry and roses on the nose with juicy cherries and berries on the palate with harmonious integration of t n'a and age related mellowing. A perfectly fine drink.*

2007 Left Edge Winery Bodega Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir Unlabeled, unreleased. Crafted by winemaker Anthony Austin who makes wine for a number of wineries including Sonoma Coast Vineyards and Churchill Cellars. A favorite of attendees at the Pinot Summit. *Deep, dark reddish-violet color. A big Caliesque wine with vigorous flavor and character featuring a dark fruit profile and notable oak throughout. Very savory.*

2005 Lions Pride El Molino High School Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 120 cases, \$35. Crafted by Bob Cabral from a small high school vineyard. A collaboration between the Russian River Valley Winegrowers Foundation and El Molino High School. Available at www.rrvwfoundation.org. *An elegant and well-composed wine of great charm. Complex aromatic profile featuring violets, roses and herbs with flavors of Bing cherries and spice. No rough edges.*

2006 Londer Vineyards Parabol Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 524 cases, 14.9% alc., \$54. A reserve blend intended for the cellar. Aged 9 months in French oak. Winemaker is Rick Davis (Calstar). Available on the website. *The nose is rather reserved with faint black fruit jam and herbal notes. Very tasty black cherry and blackberry fruit with hints of cola and brown spice. Viscous and very smoothly textured.*

2005 Orentano Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 430 cases, \$40. Winemaker is Jay Buoncristiani. Check Buoncristiani Wine for availability. *Aromas of berry and cherry compote laced with vanilla and cream. Plush and fruit-driven flavors with a soft pillowy texture and a short finish.*

2007 Schug Winery Carneros Pinot Noir 7,387 cases, \$28. This wine is sold on the website. *Enticing scents of Bing cherries, strawberries, and cedary oak. Decent core of red fruits kissed by savory herbs. Plush in the mouth and velvety in texture.*

2005 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Freestone Hills Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$45. Available on the website. *Red plums and black currants with a spicy and earthy undertone. Bright acidity on the refreshing and lively finish.*

2007 Spy Valley Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 10,000 cases, \$29.99. Imported to the U.S. by Broadbent Selections, Inc., San Francisco. *The dark side of Pinot Noir. Intense aromas of crushed plums and grapes. Plenty of sweet purple fruit and well-managed dry tannins.*

2006 TR Elliott Three Plumes Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 315 cases, \$38. Sourced from Hallberg Vineyard and O'Connell Vineyard. Clones 115 (80%), 777 (10%), Elite (5%) and Pommard (5%). Unfined and unfiltered. Another bottling, Queste, is sourced entirely from Hallberg Vineyard, contains significantly more Pommard and is quite good as well. The wines are available on the website. *Wonderful aromatics typical of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir featuring Queen Anne cherries, strawberries, baking spices and a touch of oak. Red fruits are flanked by earth, mocha and tobacco notes with well balanced tannins and acidity. Quite enjoyable.*

Decent

2007 Bohemian Vineyard Freestone Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 250 cases, \$45. *Wood kissed red fruits including cherries and cranberries. Soft tannins, brisk acidity but somewhat flat on the finish.*

2007 Brancott Terraces Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir \$28 *Deep reddish-purple in color. Shy nose offering red plum and forest floor scents. On the palate the dark fruits are loamy, almost chalky.*

2006 Brutocao Cellars Estate Bottled Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 1,770 cases, \$26. *Medium garnet color. Very attractive fruity nose alive with fresh cherries and wild berries. Lightly weighted red fruits on the palate framed by stem notes and moderate tannins.*

2006 Kenwood Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 63,500 cases, \$18. *Middleweight cherry-driven aromas and flavors with forest floor, oak and citrus accents. Substantial tannins dwarf the fruit.*

2007 Segue Cellars Filligreen Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 150 cases, \$47. *Oak and herbs dominate the nose. Tight with dry red fruits, noticeable oak and dry tannins.*

2006 Shandel's Oppenlander Vineyard Estate Mendocino County Pinot Noir 415 cases, \$45. *The flavors trump the aromas at this stage. Demure Pinot fruits which are quite vibrant and juicy with moderate tannins.*

2007 Vision Cellars Coster Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 1,130 cases, \$36, screw cap. *Fresh aromas of dark red cherries, spice, cola and mint. Flavors of dusty red cherries and a hint of oak caramel and spice. Richly flavored but not jammy and some persistence on the finish.*

The Rest

2006 Adobe Road Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 1,350 cases, \$39.

2006 Fess Parker Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 1,950 cases, \$55.

2006 Olson Ogden Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 283 cases, \$42.

2006 Paritua Central Otago Pinot Noir 600 cases, \$35.

2006 Sand Hill Durell Vineyard Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir 216 cases, \$55.

2006 Stephen's Encell Vineyard San Luis Obispo County Pinot Noir 350 cases, \$30.

2006 Willowbrook Cellars DuNah Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 190 cases, \$44.

Aromatic & Flavor Elements of Pinot Noir

Barbara Drady of Affairs of the Vine has compiled a comprehensive list of the aromatic elements of Pinot Noir. I published this list last year with some modification and revision. Because this reference list can be very helpful in improving your tasting acumen, I am repeating the list of aromatic and flavor elements in this issue.

Aromatic & Flavor Elements of Pinot Noir Grapes

Cherry, Black Cherry, Wild Cherry, Dried Cherry, Raspberry, Raspberry Jam

Strawberry, Wild Strawberry, Strawberry Jam

Blackberry, Blackberry Jam

Cranberry

Pomegranate

Rhubarb

Red and Black Current, Raisin

Plum

Tangerine, Grapefruit, Orange Peel

Rose Petals, Violets

Roasted Tomato, Ripe Tomato, Green Tomato. Beet, Black Olive

Earth, Wet Leaves, Forest Floor, Barnyard, Mushroom, Truffle

Raw or Grilled Meat, Game, Animale, Sauvage, Leather

Tea, Coffee

Licorice

Mint, Spearmint, Peppermint

Herbs, Herbs de Provence, Lavender, Rosemary

Cinnamon, Oregano, Cardamon, Black or White Pepper

Vanilla

Cola, Cherry Cola, Sassfras

Chocolate

Quinine

Oak-Derived Aromas & Flavors

Earthy: Ash, Mushroom, Shoe Box, Wet Cardboard, Musty, Leather

Herbaceous: Weedy, Dill, Mown Hay, Menthol, Grass, Tobacco

Woody: Oak, Seasoned Oak, Cedar, Sandalwood, Sawdust, Pencil Shavings, Green, Pine, Tar, Sap, Resin

Astringent: Harshness, Chewiness, Bitterness, Angular, Tannic, Drying

Spice: Clove, Cinnamon, Vanilla, Coconut

Toast-Derived Aromas & Flavors

Sweet: Brown Sugar, Bourbon, Cotton Candy, Chocolate, Maple Syrup, Butterscotch, Hot Fudge, Caramel, Molasses, Honey, Toffee, Soy

Creamy: Vanilla, Cream Soda, Marshmallow, Lactic, Butter

Yeasty: Popcorn, Baked Bread, Bread Stick, Brioche, Cookie Dough

Nutty: Hazelnut, Walnut, Almond, Peanut Butter, Coconut

Smoky: Barbecue, Grilled Meats, Bacon, Sweet Smoke, Burnt Sugar

Roasted: Graham Cracker, Toasted Bread, Coffee, Mocha, Cereal

Spicy: Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Clove, Licorice, Anise

Off-Odors

Sulfur dioxide

Hydrogen Sulfide (rotten egg)

Mercaptan (sulfur-containing compounds - onion or garlic)

Brettanomyces (horsey, stables, sweaty saddle)

Wet Newspaper, Wet Cardboard (corky)

TCA (wet cardboard, moldy)

Perdicoccus (metallic)

Wet Dog

Pickle/Sauerkraut

Rubber, Burnt

Diacetyl (a ketone - buttery or cheesy)

Acetaldehyde (oxidized smell - sherry)

Ethyl Acetate (acetic acid + ethanol - fruity)

Acetic Acid (Vinegar)

New Stars Along the Pinot Trail

Wine enthusiasts are often searching for the next great star producer of Pinot Noir. This is not surprising for it is our nature to seek out the latest news, the hottest fad. What do the first three letters in “news” spell? Who is going to be the next Sea Smoke or Kosta Browne?

Finding and identifying new Pinot Noir producers is a challenge because most of them are very small, boutique operations with little or no marketing budget. Winemakers are often shy and unassuming and promotion is not their long suit. Their total production is often less than 1,000 cases and samples may not be sent to major wine publications for review. The practice of submitting samples is a two-edged sword. A good score can boost a new producer’s visibility instantly, but a poor score can seriously damage a start up producer’s reputation.

How do I discover potential new stars? Sometimes the new producer contacts me, sends me samples and invites me to visit and taste. I rarely taste without meeting the principals face to face for this gives valuable information about the commitment, background and goals of the producer. In other cases, I meet the producer at a Pinot Noir Festival. Fine wine retailers, the wine press, wine blogs and wine websites can also be valuable sources of information.

What do I look for in a new winery to recommend? There are many factors to consider but most importantly I look at the vineyard sources and vineyard management, the winemaker’s background and experience, the owner’s (if he or she is not the winemaker) commitment, and the approachability and availability of the winery principals to the consumer. Most of all, though, what differentiates a potential new star is the quality of the Pinot Noir in the bottle.

Here are some sources of information on potential new stars along the Pinot trail (other than the *PinotFile*). Part of the fun of discovering a new wine is the search.

Publications

The Pinot Report, www.pinotreport.com
Wine Press Northwest, www.winepress.com
Oregon Wine Press, www.oregonwinepress.com
Wine Advocate, www.erobertparker.com
Burghound, www.burghound.com
International Wine Cellar (Steve Tanzer), www.wineaccess.com
Wine Enthusiast, www.we.com
Wine Spectator, www.ws.com
Wine & Spirits, www.wineandspiritsmagazine.com
Quarterly Review of Wines, www.qrw.com

Wine Retailers

(Informative newsletters or websites)

K&L Wines (California), www.klwines.com
Wine Exchange (California), www.winex.com
Hi-Time Wine Cellars (California), www.hitime.com
Avalon Wine (Oregon), www.northwestwine.com
Storyteller Wines (Oregon), www.storyteller.com

Wine Search Engines

Wine Searcher, www.wine-searcher.com
Wine Access, www.wineaccess.com
Vinquire, www.vinquire.com
Wine Zap, www.winezap.com

On The Web

Grape Radio, www.graperadio.com

Vinography: A Wine Blog, www.vinography.com

Grape-Nutz, www.grape-nutz.com

There are at least 600 wine blogs on the internet - search at www.alawine.com

SPELL Winery

I first met Shane Finley while he was working as an assistant winemaker at Kosta Browne Winery in Sebastopol, California. He struck me as a bright, dedicated and passionate vintner. Shane grew up in Minnesota and after college found himself working in an insurance company cubicle in New York. During the process of entertaining clients at mealtimes, he was able to order good wines and became fascinated about wine. Shane soon left the insurance industry behind and ventured to California where a friend hooked him up with a job as a cellar rat at Copain Wine Cellars in Santa Rosa. Shane laughs about his first day on the job. Wells Guthrie said, "This is an ozone machine, this is how you do punchdowns," and left him alone. The first three months on the job he did nothing but cleaning. Later he would travel down under and work at Torbreck in Australia and intern in France at G. Villard. He then found a home at Kosta Browne working under the tutelage of winemaker Michael Browne. Michael has great admiration for Shane's work ethic and winemaking skills and has encouraged him to strike out on his own. For now, Shane feels comfortable remaining at Kosta Browne and slowly developing a following for his own private label, SPELL Winery.

Shane's first two releases are from the 2007 vintage and were released in February, 2009. Total production is 170 cases. I tasted the two 2007 SPELL Pinot Noirs on three separate occasions and can recommend them both.



2007 SPELL Barton Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 45 cases, \$47. The Barton Vineyard is located just outside the Green Valley sub-appellation of the Russian River Valley on Vine Hill Road. Clones 115 and Pommard. 25% whole cluster fermentation, aged 20 months in 50% new French oak, unfined and unfiltered. *Enticing and penetrating aromas of strawberries, raspberries, cola, baking spices and sandalwood. Very "Russian Riveresque" and I loved it. Red fruit driven flavors which are leaner than the Weir bottling but enough richness to satisfy. Very smoothly textured and nicely balanced. Will get even better in another one to two years.*



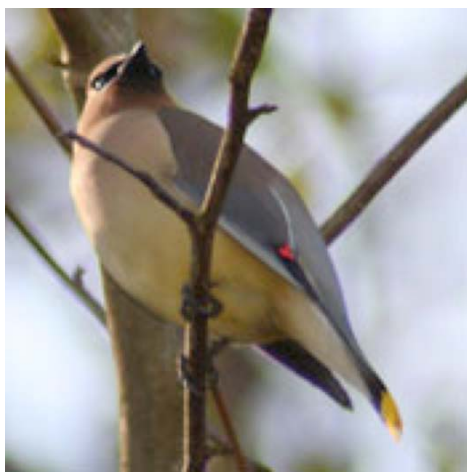
2007 SPELL Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 120 cases, \$47. The Weir vineyard is owned and farmed by Bill and Suki Weir and is located at elevations of 850 to 1000 feet on south and southwest facing gentle slopes. Clones 2A, Rochioli and DRC suitcase. 20% whole cluster fermentation, aged 10 months in 40% new French oak, unfined and unfiltered. *Dark reddish-violet color. Needs time to open. Brooding dark cherry and berry fruit aromas and flavors with a touch of citric peel on the back end. Flamboyant tannins coat the mouth and need time to be shed. The succulent fruit became more accessible in the opened bottle as I sampled it later in the day. If you open it now, drink it with a big ribeye steak.*



The SPELL Pinot Noirs are sold through a mailing list and directly from the website at www.spellwinery.com. Contact Shane at 612-767-1109. Try to meet Shane on one of your Sonoma wine trips as he is a very gracious and engaging personality.

Waxwing Wine Cellars

Scott Sisemore is the only stay-at-home dad and winemaker that I know of. Scott has an impressive winemaking background that followed his graduation from Oregon State University with a BS degree in microbiology. From 1993 to 2000, he worked at a custom crush facility in Mendocino County and was involved with the Mark West label. He spent time making wine abroad in both India and Chile. After stints at Rosenblum and Ravenswood learning red wine making techniques, he returned to school obtaining an MS degree from University California Davis. He then became the assistant winemaker at Pellegrini Family Vineyards where I met up with him originally. Scott left Pellegrini in 2006 to stay at home with his newborn son. His wife had a well-paying job for a biotech company with good benefits so it made more sense for Scott to take over the daily household duties. To keep his professional drive alive, he founded a small winery, Waxwing Wine Cellars, to enable him to create ultra-small lot, handcrafted, cool climate Pinot Noir and Syrah. I visited recently with Scott at his leased space at Domenico Wines in San Carlos, California. We talked a little Pinot but mainly about his hobby ultimate Frisbee and the origin of the name Waxwing. The waxwing is a migratory bird named for beads of shiny red material ("sealing wax") on the tips of the secondary wing feathers, the function of which is open to much speculation. The bird has a propensity for over eating (they have been known to be so gluttonous as to be unable to fly) and constant chatter.



The inaugural Waxwing wine, the 2007 Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, was released early this year. Scott met Joe Toboni while working at Pellegrini. During 2005 and 2006 Scott was involved with the custom crushing of Pinot Noir for Merry Edwards, Ted Elliott, Kevin Hamel as well as the Pellegrini Olivet Lane Pinot Noir. Joe brought fruit to the Pellegrini facility to produce his own Oakwild Ranch label. Scott was impressed by his Pinot Noirs and he enjoyed working with Joe. After leaving Pellegrini, Bob Pellegrini was shedding grape sources to concentrate more on his own fruit so Scott approached Joe to buy fruit and they decided to work on a handshake agreement. The Toboni family has been rooted in the San Francisco Bay area for several generations. Joe is a builder and his wife works in real estate. Joe and Mary Toboni bought their 25-acre property in the 1990s as a family (they have five children) getaway and planted 16 acres to Pinot Noir in 2000 and 3 additional acres in 2004. The Toboni Vineyard is located about a quarter of a mile west of the intersection of River Road and Olivet Lane.

Scott's Toboni vineyard block was planted in 2004 and is clone Pommard 5 grafted onto 101-14 rootstock. The yield in 2007 was 1 ton for the entire 3-acre block.

2007 Waxwing Wine Cellars Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 55 cases, \$30. Aged in 1 year-old French oak barrels. *Alluring aromas of Bing cherries, baking spice and sandalwood. Soft in the mouth with appealing elegant cherry pie flavors kissed gently by oak displaying a refreshing tang on the finish. A lighter-bodied wine that is almost ethereal and very easy to drink. The admirable acidity makes this wine a good food companion.*



2005 Arista Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$50. For comparison purposes I sampled this wine at the same time to compare with the Waxwing. *Oak char dominates the nose and the delicate red fruits. A silky wine that drifts over the palate with fruit that is clearly stellar, but the oak is overwhelming. I prefer the Waxwing for its prettier fruit expression.*

I sampled the 2008 Toboni Vineyard Pinot Noir out of barrel (75 cases) and although it is darker and richer with more tannin and alcohol, it also has lively acidity and is equally fine. Scott's stated goal is to create wines with good acidity and sensible alcohol that are elegant in style. Scott will be hosting a Waxwing Wine Cellars launch party on Sunday, April 19, 2009, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at Domenico Wines, 1697 Industrial Road, San Carlos, CA 94070. The 2007 Pinot Noir and barrel samples of the 2008 Pinot Noir and 2008 Syrah will be available for tasting along with gourmet tidbits (Scott is a good cook as well). The 2007 Waxwing Wine Cellars Toboni Vineyard Pinot Noir is available through a mailing list and can be ordered directly online (10% off orders of 6 bottles or more and free shipping to the San Francisco mid-peninsula area).

Tre Viti Wines

Don and Charlene Stolo bought 53 acres at the mouth of the Santa Rosa Valley about one and one half miles inland from the town of Cambria in the Central Coast of California in 2002. The known history of the Stolo Family property dates back to the late 1800s, when, according to local historian, Dawn Dunlap, the Phillips Family were the owners. They established a profitable dairy and planted 30 acres of oat hay in the field adjacent Santa Rosa Creek, a year-round stream spawning Steelhead Trout and a habitat for deer, bobcats, coyotes, wild boars, mountain lions and skunks. Phillips sold the property in the early 1900s to Italian-Swiss immigrant Salvaore (Sam) Berri and his wife, Katherine. The Berris enlarged the dairy operation, sold dairy products to nearby Harmony and built the barn seen on the property today. Sam Berri began buying grapes from York and Pesenti Family Wineries in Templeton to make his own wine and pressed the leftover skins to make a fiery grappa. For over 30 years, Sam had a prosperous grappa business in Cambria. One of his customers was saloon owner Rosa Camozzi and Camozzi's bar still exists in downtown Cambria. Sam and Katherine died in the early 1960s and their children sold the property to John and Peggy Prian who restored the historic Phillips/Berri house on the property. They planted a 9-acre vineyard to Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah and sold the grapes to local winemakers.

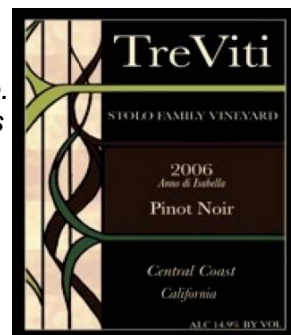
In 2002, the property was acquired by the Stolos who decided to begin producing their own wine. As Italian-Americans, Don and Charlene grew up with wine as part of their families' meals and celebrations. Their grandparents on the East Coast bought grapes from California to make wine. In 2004, with the help of their three children and neighbors, Don and Charlene harvested their first vintage from Stolo Family Vineyard. They bottled 176 cases under the Tre Viti Wines label. Tre Viti is Italian for "three vines." The theme of three was a natural considering the Stolos have three children and three varieties are planted in the Stolo Family Vineyard. Each new vintage is dedicated to Don and Charlene's grandchildren whose name is displayed on the label.

The Tre Viti winemaker is Stephen Dooley. Dooley is a University California Davis graduate with over twenty years of experience as a winemaker at Louis Martini Winery, Edna Valley Vineyard and Stephen Ross. The Stolo Family Vineyard is managed by Bill Kesselring who has been consulting on vineyards for a decade in Napa Valley, Sonoma County and the Central Coast including wineries such as Turley, Talley and Justin.

The proximity of the Stolo Family Vineyard to the Pacific Ocean which lies less than three miles away, makes the vineyard site unique. The location is quite cool and protected from heat spikes creating growing conditions that lead to a long hang time and small berries with concentrated flavors.

Future plans include construction of a winery and wine tasting facility on the property with projected completion in 2009 and the planting of additional vines on the land adjacent Santa Rosa Creek.

2006 Tre Viti Wines Stolo Family Vineyard Anna di Isabella Central Coast Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 72 , \$32. Yields 1.24 tons per acre, harvested at 27.4 Brix. Aged in 33% new French oak. Unfined and unfiltered. *Dark fruit aromas with whiffs of oak spice. A mid-weighted wine with ripe dark raspberry, edible flower and oak flavors. The tannins are nicely corralled and there is a refreshing citrus note to the finish which lingers with a riff of herbaceous oak.*



Tre Viti Wines are sold on the winery's website at www.treviti.com. 866-212-7168. The winery also produces a Pinot Noir from Bien Nacido Vineyard (Santa Maria Valley).

Lucienne

Winemaker Paul Clifton came to wine from a firefighting career. He grew up in the Monterey Bay area and always felt the lure of the outdoors and agriculture. After college he considered a white collar job in the financial world but felt he was more suited to fight fires. After working as a firefighter for a few years, he decided to change careers and in 1996 began his pursuit of becoming a professional winemaker. He started at Bernardus Winery in Carmel Valley, where he was mentored by Don Blackburn, a well-known Pinot Noir vintner who now crafts wine at Emeritus in the Russian River Valley. Paul worked his way up from cellar rat to cellar master at Bernardus and in 1999 moved on to Byington Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains as assistant winemaker. He developed a passion for cool climate viticulture and Pinot Noir in particular. To further his knowledge, he attended Lincoln University on the South Island of New Zealand and received a postgraduate degree in viticulture. Upon returning to the United States in 2003, he began working at Hahn Estates in the Santa Lucia Highlands with winemakers Adam Lazarre and Barry Gnekow. With time, Paul became the head winemaker at Hahn Estates and has brought the winery's Pinot Noir program to prominence. Like many winemakers, Paul is rather shy and unassuming and underplays his considerable accomplishments.

Lucienne Vineyards is an estate winery within the Hahn Estates umbrella of wines launched with the 2005 vintage. Owned by Nicholas Lucien Hahn, the winery is a separate facility - a winery within a winery. The goal at Lucienne is to produce premium Pinot Noir in small lots from two exceptional estate vineyards: Lone Oak Vineyard and Doctor's Vineyard. The winery takes its name from Nicky Hahn's middle name Lucien, but in the feminine form to honor the namesake of the Santa Lucia Mountain range where the vineyards are located.

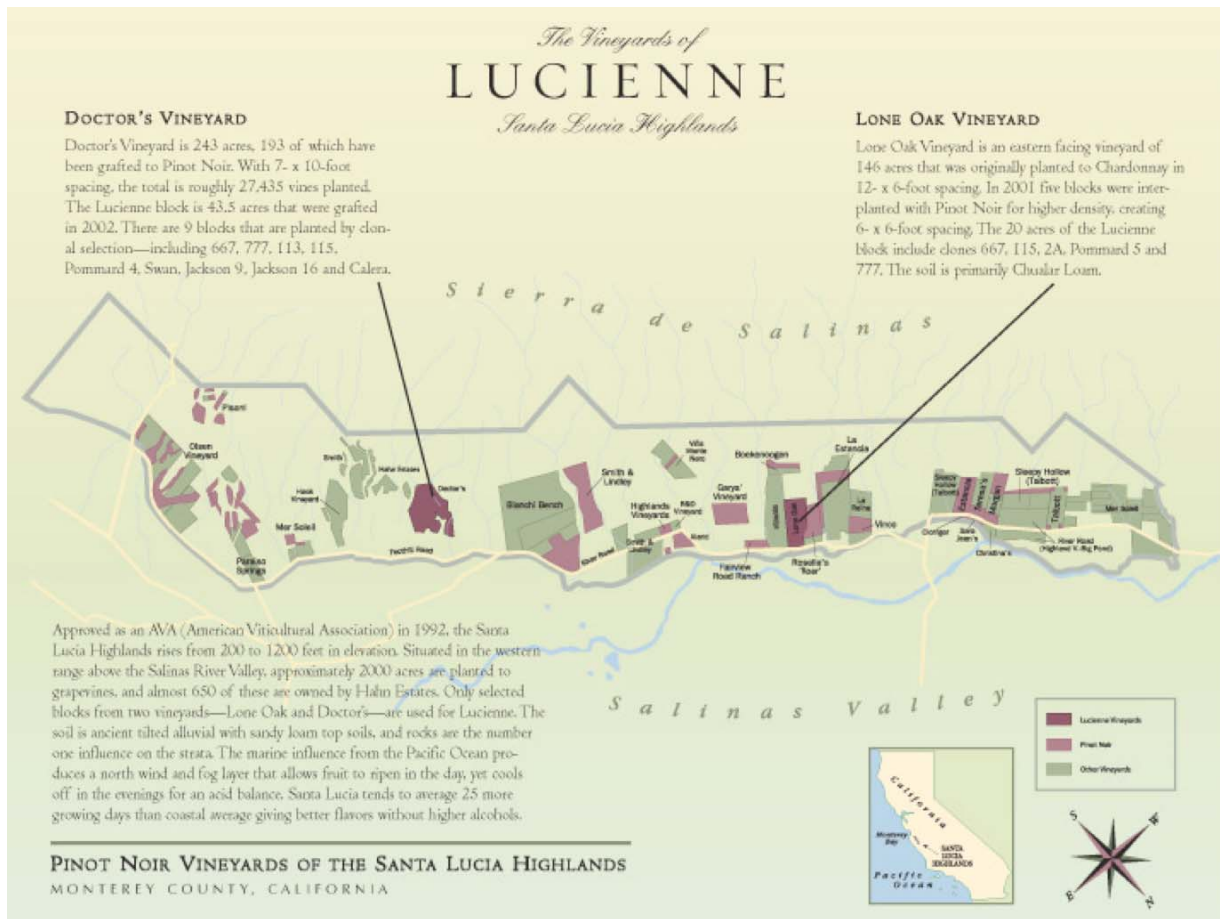
The two vineyards are located on southeast facing slopes above the fog line creating a long daily exposure to the sun combined with cooling winds from Monterey Bay creating a long growing season (refer to map below).

2006 Lucienne Vineyards Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 347 cases, \$35. Vineyard planted in 2002. 100% de-stemmed, cold soak for 3 days, inoculated with BGY yeast, fermented in 3-ton open top fermenters, punched down three times a day, pressed with a basket press. Aged 12 months in 47% new and 53% neutral French oak barrels. *Deep rich nose of fresh plum tart with near port aromas. Brambly, earthy and rich dark stone fruit flavors with a riff of raisin and oak, framed by soft tannins and good acidity. The fruit approaches but does not cross over into overripeness.*





2006 Lucienne Vineyards Lone Oak Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 217 cases, \$45. Vineyard planted in 2001. 100% de-stemmed, lightly crushed, 3 day cold soak, fermented in 3-ton open top fermenters, inoculated with EC1118 yeast, punched down three times a day. Free run put to barrel, wine was pressed using a basket press, aged 12 months in 50% new and 50% neutral French oak barrels. *A thoroughly enjoyable wine with attractive spiced black cherries on the nose, dark cherries and raspberries on the palate framed by notes of coffee, leather and brown spice, augmented by supple tannins and ending with a lasting and silky finish.*



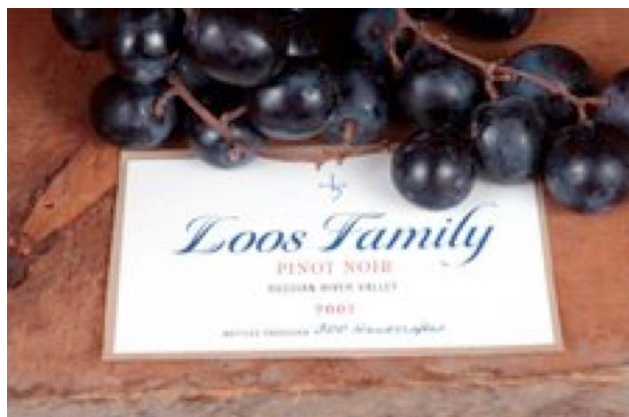
Lucienne Pinot Noirs are sold through the website at www.luciennevineyards.com. 831-678-2132. 37700 Foothill Road, PO Drawer C, Soledad, CA 93960. The Hahn Estates tasting room in Soledad is open daily.

Loos Family Winery

The Loos Family hails from Iowa where sweet dandelion and rhubarb wines were on the family table. In the 1960s, the family relocated to San Diego and then Greenbrae, California, where family trips to nearby Napa Valley and Sonoma ignited a passion for fine wine.

Loos Family crafts very small amounts of handcrafted wine vinified in single barrels yielding no more than 300 bottles of wine per barrel. Grapes are sourced from sustainable vineyards with an emphasis on crop thinning to produce even ripening and intensification of flavors. Winemaking employs small open top fermenters, cold soaks, native and cultured yeasts, manual punch downs, gentle bladder pressing, MLF in barrel, and minimal racking.

The Loos Family Logo is an artistic conglomeration of various symbols. The upper half consists of a cross with three points with each point representing an immediate family member and the overall cross shape reminds the Loos' of faith. The lower half takes the shape of a folded heart. This represents love of family, winemaking and life.



The first release from Loos Family is the 2007 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir from Bohemian Vineyard, a 7-acre parcel in Freestone that was planted from 1998 to 2000. Pinot Noir is the winery's flagship wine. Since the Loos Family are proponents of terroir, all the wines are vineyard designates yet curiously the front labels do not display the vineyard name. In 2008, there will be a Pinot Noirs again from Bohemian Vineyard and a second release from Annahala Vineyard in the Anderson Valley. The winemaker is Chris Nelson.



2007 Loos Family Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 300 btl, \$40 (sold out). Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777 in equal amounts. Yields 2.5 tons per acre. Extended 9-day cold soak, gentle hand punch downs three times a day, 10 day fermentation with wild and proprietary yeast, aged 9+ months in 50% new and 50% neutral Francois Freres French oak with medium toast plus. Unfined and unfiltered. *Light garnet color. Complex aromatics showing black cherry, cinnamon apple, cola and a hint of oak.*



Lovely cherry fruit on an elegant platform with fine-grain tannins and a tangy finish displaying orange peel and a delicate floral bent that is very appealing. Very impressive effort for first time out.

Loos Family wines are sold through a mailing list and on the website at www.loosfamilywinery.com. 408-799-5938 (San Jose).

Berridge Wines

Richard Berridge, a landscape architect by trade, was one of the original founders of Duckhorn Wine in 1978 and has been involved in the wine industry ever since. In 2000, Berridge started his own Pinot Noir label out of Central Otago, New Zealand, called Drystone. Serendipity brought him together with winemakers Ginny Lambrix and Greg La Follette and several memorable barrels of 2007 California Pinot Noir. The two 2007 Pinot Noirs are from the Manchester Ridge Vineyard in Mendocino County and Van Der Kamp Vineyard on Sonoma Mountain. These first releases were debuted at the 2009 World of Pinot Noir at Shell Beach, California which is where I sampled the wines. The wines had created some buzz at the World of Pinot Noir and I stopped by the booth to meet Richard and Ginny. I do not have detailed tasting notes but I can confirm that the wines were very well crafted, drinking quite harmoniously despite 15% alcohols (Ginny confided they were 15% but label reads 14.5%). It is ironic that I was circulating among the crowd with videographer Mark Ryan for Grape Radio as we asked a number of winemakers short questions including, "Can a Pinot Noir be in balance with 15% alcohol?" These wines were proof of the possibility. We also asked winemakers to finish the statement, "Pinot Noir is like sex because....." You will have to watch and listen to Grape Radio (www.graperadio.com) to hear the many clever and hilarious answers.

The Pinot Noirs are hand crafted using small 4-ton, open top former milk tanks with hand punch downs. Aging was carried out in 50% new barriques from Francois Freres, 3 year air dried, high toast and 50% once used Ramon barriques, medium toast long.

2007 Berridge Wines Manchester Ridge Mendocino County Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 46 cases, unreleased. I have had a number of fine Pinot Noirs from this vineyard which is planted along the first ridge from the Pacific Coast, a mere three miles from the Pacific Ocean. The site's cool, maritime climate slows growth and ripening and this vineyard is consistently one of the last to be harvested. Clones 114, 115 and 777 compose this blend.

2007 Berridge Wines Van Der Kamp Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 44 cases, unreleased. This vineyard is along the north facing slope of Sonoma Mountain planted in volcanic soils. 50% of the blend is old vine heritage selection planted 35 years ago, 25% Swan selection and 25% Pinot Meunier.

The two Pinot Noirs are scheduled for a fall 2009 release. Join the mailing list at www.berridgewines.com to receive an offering of the wines. 707-963-9701.

Dancing With the Stars of Pinot in Oregon

International Pinot Noir Celebration

The 23rd annual International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC), billed as “Planet Earth’s Premier Pinot Noir Event,” is scheduled for July 24-26, 2009. This is the granddaddy and the most heralded of all Pinot Noir festivals. Over 60 carefully selected premier Pinot Noir producers from Oregon, California, Burgundy, New Zealand, Austria, Champagne and Alsace will gather with 700 Pinot geeks to spend three days tasting exceptional wines, savoring unforgettable meals, and learning and celebrating with luminaries of the food and wine world. Jancis Robinson, a world-renowned wine educator and wine writer will be the 2009 Master of Ceremonies.

Two seminars on soil and geology are featured which are certain to make every Pinot geek’s heart beat faster. The morning seminar, “Down to Earth: Digging Deeper into Oregon’s Soils,” will have Jancis Robinson leading guests in a comparative blind tasting and discussion of ten Oregon Pinot Noirs made from two specially selected vineyards in the Willamette Valley. The Oregon winemaker panel composed of Terry Casteel (Bethel Heights Vineyard), Steve Doerner (Cristom Vineyards), Laurent Montalieu (Soléna Cellars), Lynn Penner-Ash (Penner-Ash Wine Cellars) and Ken Wright (Ken Wright Cellars) will explore the question of how soil, geology and the winemaker’s approach affect the expression of Pinot Noir. The afternoon seminar will be led by esteemed journalist David Schildknecht and eminent winemaker Francois Millet of Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé who will take attendees on a virtual tour of the village of Chambolle-Musigny, discussing the soils, geology and terroir of some of the world’s most famous vineyards. A tasting of the lineup of 2006 Comte de Vogüé wines will include the famed Grand Crus Bonnes Mares and Musigny Vieilles Vignes.



Pinot Noir is the most food-friendly wine on the planet and the 50 distinguished northwest guest chefs who attend the IPNC highlighting the wines with memorable meals. For Friday’s Grand Dinner, chefs Vitaly Paley of Paley’s Place, Stephanie Pearl Kimmel and Rocky Maselli of Marché, Adam Stevenson of Earth and Ocean and John Sundstrom of Lark will team up with a local farmer to create inspired courses alongside a collection of wines, both new and aged, poured by guest sommeliers who return year after year to make the whole experience delightful. Saturday night’s Northwest Salmon Bake features chefs Benjamin Dyer, Jason Owens and David Kreifels of Simpatica, mark Hosack of Gracie’s and Jason Stoller Smith of The Dundee Bistro.

Other activities include a pairing of New Zealand wines with world-class cheeses, a sensory presentation of soils and local farm produce and an intimate vineyard tour and winery lunch at one of the nearby Willamette Valley winery destinations. Two outdoor walk-around tastings will feature the 2006 and 2007 vintages of Pinot Noir. Last year there were at least 16 Domaines from Burgundy pouring their wines at the walk-arounds, unmatched by any other American Pinot Noir event.

Tickets for the full event are \$975 all inclusive. Reserve a dorm room on the campus of Linfield College (there are no exams), immerse yourself in Pinot Noir and enjoy a weekend that you will treasure forever. Join the Prince and dance with the Pinot stars of the world. For details, visit www.ipnc.org or call 800-775-IPNC.

¡Salud! The Oregon Pinot Noir Auction

In November, 2008, I attended the ¡Salud! Oregon Pinot Noir Auction for the first time and I enjoyed myself so much I have vowed to attend yearly. The dates are Friday and Saturday, November 13 & 14, 2009. On Friday there is a Big Board Auction of cases of 2008 ¡Salud! Cuvées from Oregon's top Pinot Noir producers held at Domaine Drouhin Oregon in the Dundee Hills. Attendees can stroll through the three level winery, sampling 2008 Pinot Noirs from over 40 wineries and bid on these special lots which are only available through this auction. This is the first extensive public showing and offering of Oregon's 2008 vintage of Pinot Noirs. The vintage has been justifiably highly touted ("the best in Oregon's history" some claim. Don't laugh this not shallow hype). My suggestion is to form a consortium, bid on a special case of Pinot Noir and party on.

Saturday is the festive auction and dinner gala at Portland's historic Governor Hotel. This is a more intimate affair, attended by all of Oregon's winemaking luminaries who are pouring their wines and celebrating in a Paulée type atmosphere. The evening features formal attire but casual ambiance in the Oregon manner. Participating wineries included among many, Adelsheim Vineyard, Antica Terra, Argyle, Beaux Freres, Cristom Vineyards, Domaine Drouhin Oregon, Elk Cove Vineyards, Hamacher Wines, Ken Wright Cellars, Ponzi Vineyards, Raptor Ridge Winery, Scott Paul Wines, Soter Vineyards, St. Innocent Winery, Stoller, Westrey Wine Company and Willakenzie Estate.



The mission of ¡Salud! is to address the hurdles faced by seasonal vineyard workers in Oregon who cannot meet their basic health needs with often only a few months of income to stretch over a full year. ¡Salud! provides access to healthcare for Oregon's these under-served seasonal vineyard workers and their families. ¡Salud!'s Clinical Services Manager, Leda Garside RN, was recently honored with the Outstanding Service Award at the Oregon Wine Symposium.

Tickets which include both ¡Salud! events are \$395 and are available online through www.saludauction.org or by calling 503-681-1850. I will be dancing with some Pinot at this year's event and I hope you can join in on the fun.

PS: Andrea Johnson, one of the talented photographers whose remarkable images are in a new book on Pinot Noir, *Passion for Pinot*, took the picture of my wife Patti and I at last year's ¡Salud! Every pinotophile must have this book in their library. Check the book out (www.pinotbook.com).

Pinot Briefs

Sideways Still Creating a Stir Rex Pickett has now taken his Pinot loyalty to Oregon's Willamette Valley. Pickett headed to Oregon's Willamette Valley to golf, but as reported in the March/April 2009 issue of *Travel and Leisure Gold*, he managed to make the rounds of several top Oregon Pinot Noir producers. When interviewed by Katherine Cole for *The Oregonian* (February 25, 2009), Pickett said, "I think the Willamette Valley is way beyond Santa Ynez. I frankly think those wines (from Santa Ynez) are overpriced. They'll kill me for saying this, but that movie gave them a real boon and I'm not sure they really deserved it. They don't make bad wines, but I was really stuck by the people up in Oregon who are not in it for the money but for the craft of winemaking." Apparently Pickett has written a sequel to *Sideways* called "The Road Back," which features Miles as a successful writer and Jack on the skids after a divorce. The two of them head to Oregon to the IPNC.



J Vineyards & Winery Launches New Labels The yellow "J" logo has been an icon for more than 20 years representing both varietal and sparkling bottlings from J Vineyards & Winery. Beginning with the 2007 vintage lineup of six Pinot Noirs (and 2008 Pinot Gris and Vin Gris and 2007 Chardonnay) J's varietal wine releases will have a new "J Vineyards" brand name with a more traditional wine bottle label that is sleek and modern sans the "J." The introduction of "J Vineyards" as the brand name signifies owner Judy Jordan's commitment to estate grown wines with a special emphasis on Pinot Noir. J's estate acreage includes more than 20 different soil types, multiple rootstocks and 15 clones of Pinot Noir.

WineRelease.com This site is an excellent information source of winery's and winery releases. Created by Neil Monnens, it now includes release schedules for 1,319 wineries. The monthly newsletter is free at www.winerelease.com. A recent subscriber survey composed of 500 subscribers to the site's newsletter were reported. There were a number of very interesting findings. Not surprisingly, 68% of responders said their monthly wine budget was decreasing. 77% admit to wine critic scores influencing their wine buying. Of the many wine review sources, the highest confidence was with *The Wine Advocate* (Robert Parker), followed by *Wine Spectator*, the *International Wine Cellar* (Steve Tanzer) and *Burghound* (Allen Meadows). The remainder of wine review sources such as *Wine Enthusiast* and *Wine & Spirits* had low confidence levels. *Wine Spectator* has the highest subscriber rate at 84% followed by *The Wine Advocate* at 54%.

Red Wine Increases Female Libido A study from Santa Maria Nuova Hospital in Florence found that drinking one to two glasses of red wine a day increased female sex drive and women who drank one to two glasses of wine a day were found to be more sexually active than those who abstain. Unfortunately, alcohol may increase the desire but decrease the ability to have orgasms in both men and women. The "brewer's droop" is a common term referring to the impotence that may follow drinking alcohol in males. Women may find sexual desires heightened through removal of inhibitions but too much wine or alcohol makes it less like that she will have an orgasm as well.

AlaWine.com This is a very interesting website that comes out of Sonoma County. The "Super-Award-Winning" wines (Best of Show, Sweepstakes Winners, Best of Class, Best of Varietal, Double Gold Medal) from regional, national and international wine competitions are posted. In wine competitions, these "Super Award" winners are the wines that you should pay the most attention to. Judging at major wine competitions is notoriously fraught with inconsistencies and errors but at the "Super Award" level the awards represent a consensus of the judging panels and thus have significant validity. The site's host, "KenW," also reviews a number of the "Super Award" wines. The site contains a ranking of wine blogs and a search engine for 600 wine blogs. Visit www.alawine.com.

Vintronix Tasting Device *Oregon Wine Press* ran a hilarious spoof titled "Taste with Confidence" in their April issue (www.oregonwinepress.com) to commemorate April's Fool's Day. The purported Vintronix hand-held device is inserted in a glass of wine and gives an instant numerical wine score based on the 100-point system. The device is reportedly a godsend for those who feel they lack expertise in judging wine. "Many times I have enjoyed a nice glass of wine only to later find that it had scored poorly. This can be embarrassing." Testing with the Vintronix found that Oregon Pinot Noir was superior to Burgundy Pinot Noir. An advanced tester (the "Vin-Magician") is being developed that will allow winemakers to find out scores directly from barrel!

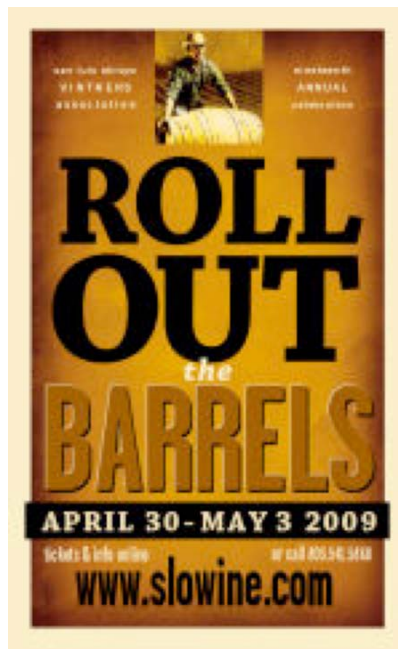
More Pinot Events



Pinot Days San Francisco, Fort Mason June 24th-28th, 2009

The 5th Annual Pinot Days at Fort Mason, San Francisco will feature 200 acclaimed Pinot Noir producers pouring their 2007 vintage wines at the Grand Festival on Sunday, June 28th, with many other preceding events geared for pinotphiles. On Wednesday, June 24, the Newcomers in Pinot tasting will feature 16 new hounds to the Pinot race. I will be moderating this tasting seminar. The Producer Spotlight Tasting in the evening on June 24 will be an intimate affair with accomplished winemaker Ed Kurtzman (Freeman, August West). Ed is one of the most approachable winemakers I know and this is a rare opportunity to spend an evening with Ed and his superb wines. Thursday, June 25, features the Winemakers Table Hop Dinner at Pres A Vi Restaurant. On Friday, June 26, join 80 people as they taste Pinot Noir along Westside Road in the Russian River Valley, culminating in a concert and barbecue at C. Donatiello Winery. The bus tour will include special tastings at Arista, John Tyler, Gary Farrell and Thomas George Estates. On Saturday, June 27, there will be a series of four 2-hour seminars: Celebrated Vineyards: Hirsch, Keefer Ranch, Pisoni and Clos Pepe, Pinot's 2007 Vintage: Gems from the Southern AVAs (16 winemakers from Santa Maria Valley, Santa Rita Hills, Santa Lucia Highlands, and Santa Barbara County), Pinot's 2007 Vintage: Gems from the Northern AVAs (16 winemakers from Russian River Valley, Carneros, Anderson Valley, Santa Cruz Mountains and the Sonoma Coast), and The Legends of California Pinot Noir (Richard Sanford of Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards), Merry Edwards (Merry Edwards Wines), Jean Arnold and Bob Sessions (Hanzell) and Jeffrey Patterson (Mount Eden). Join the Prince as I moderate all of these tastings. There is also a series of retail store tastings in the San Francisco Bay area leading up to Pinot Days. For all the details and to obtain tickets, visit www.pinotdays.com. The event's tag line says it all: "Serious wines, serious fun."





Four days of San Luis Obispo wine and food. On Thursday, April 30, the Barrels in the Plaza event is held in downtown San Luis Obispo's Mission Plaza. On Friday, May 1, there are Winemaker Dinners throughout south San Luis Obispo County hosted by wineries including Baileyana, Claiborne & Churchill, Domaine Alfred, Edna Valley Vineyard, Laetitia Winery, Ortman Family Vineyards & Salisbury Vineyards, Per Bacco Cellars and Tolosa Winery. Saturday and Sunday, May 2 and 3, participating wineries will have special open houses and events. Roll Out the Barrels is sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Vintners Association (SLO Vintners). Visit www.slowine.com for details, to view a video on the event, and buy tickets.

Another regional event of great interest is a winemaker dinner by Mike Sinor (formerly Domaine Alfred, now Sinor-LaVallee and Ancient Peaks) at Et Voilà restaurant in San Luis Obispo on Friday, April 24, 2009. For reservations call the restaurant at 805-544-3663. Mike is pictured below talking PInot.

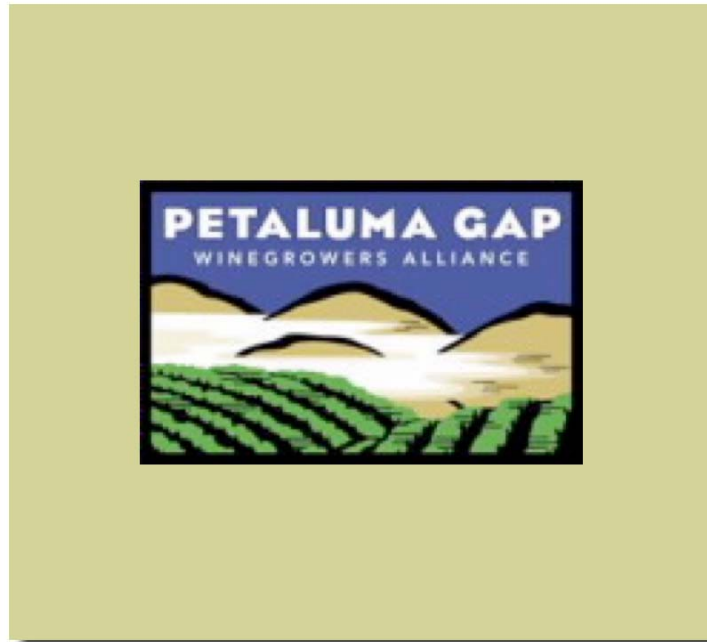




Taste the Place showcases a select gathering of estate wineries of the Yamhill-Carlton District AVA of Oregon's Willamette Valley on Saturday, April 25 from 11:00 to 4:00 at Anne Amie Vineyards, 6580 N.E. Mineral Springs Road in Carlton. \$10 admission includes tasting and appetizers. Participating Yamhill Valley restaurants include Cuvée, Joel Palmer House, La Rambla and Nick's Italian Cafe. Participating wineries include Anne Amie, ADEA, Atticus, Barbara Thomas, Belle Pente, Carlton Hill, Carlton Cellars, Elk Cove, Ken Wright, Kramer, Lemelson, Monk's Gate, Panther Creek, Raptor Ridge, Resonance, Roots, Shea, Sineann, Soléna, Soter, Stag Hollow, Twelve and Willakenzie Estate. For details visit www.yamhillcarltondistrict.com or phone 503864-2991. This event is part of the Willamette Valley Wineries Association's 150 Days of Wine in the Willamette Valley, a series of wine events and activities taking place between Valentine's Day and Labor Day 290. For more information on these events, visit www.willamettewines.com/oregon150/index.shtm/.



The Dundee Hills Winegrowers Association presents the 4th Annual Dundee Hills Passport Tour on Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19. Interesting seminars are scheduled such as "All You Want to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask Regarding Vineyards and Grape Growing," "Benefits of Sustainable Agriculture," "Starting Your Own Winery - Dream or Delusion," and "How Mother Nature Dictates Vintages and How We Deal With It." Over 30 wineries are participating, many of which I have featured in the *PinotFile* including Argyle Winery, Daedalus Cellars, Dobbles Family Estate Winery, Domaine Drouhin Oregon, The Eyrie Vineyards, The Four Graces, Lange Estate Winery, Maresh Red Hills Vineyard, Stoller Vineyards, and Winderlea Vineyard & Winery. For information and to download your passport visit www.dundeehills.org.



Petaluma Gap Update

Jason Jenkins, the owner of Vine and Barrel Wine Shop in downtown Petaluma, is hosting another major Pinot Noir tasting featuring the wines from the Petaluma Gap region of the Sonoma Coast on Saturday April 18, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. The lineup of participating wineries includes Sonoma Harvest Fair winners James Family and Calstar Cellars, Chronicle Gold Medal Winner Bohemian Vineyard, as well as Hart's Desire, Clary Ranch, Kastania, Ridgeway, Balletto, Boheme, Windy Hill and more. Jason will be roasting a 100 pound pig and local cheese makers will be offering samples. Adobe Road Winery's Jeff Buckler will have his Le Mans racing Porsche for viewing and a special guest will provide live music. See why all the buzz about Petaluma Gap Pinot Noirs. Tickets are \$30 per person. Call 707-765-1112 for tickets. This will sell out!

The first Petaluma Gap Vineyard Tour will be held on Sunday, April 18. This is an informal gathering of Petaluma Gap enthusiasts hosted by some of the local vineyards and wineries. This is not necessarily a wine tasting event, but rather an opportunity to meet growers, walk the vineyards and learn about the Gap's wineries. The host properties at this first Tour include Ridgeway Vineyards, Clary Ranch Vineyards and Azari Winery. There are plans to continue these tours on a biweekly basis throughout the spring and early summer months. RSVP to pgapinfo@petalumagap.com or call the Petaluma Gap Winegrowers Alliance President, Teela Ridgeway at 707-778-0447.

There are two Petaluma Gap videos on You Tube at <http://rivetti.petaluma360.com/default.asp?item=2357507> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zndczE3e55E>. The question of whether the Petaluma Gap should have its own appellation designation is discussed.

The Petaluma Gap Winegrowers Alliance has a new revamped and informative website at www.petalumagap.com. Member vintners include Adobe Road Winery, Armagh Vineyard, Azari Winery, Clary Ranch Wines, Cline Cellars, Crushpad, Field Vineyards & Winery, Hummingbird Hill Vineyards, Kastania Vineyards, Keller Estate, Morris Ranch, Pfendler Vineyards, Ridgeway Family Vineyards and Sonoma Valley Portworks. There are over 3,000 acres of vineyards in the Petaluma Gap ranging in size from a backyard plot to hundreds of acres. The main varietals are Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah. Many growers sell grapes to noted wineries such as Auteur, Belle-Glos, Bouchaine, Chasseur, DuMol, Dutton-Goldfield, Flowers, Harrington Wine, Kosta Browne, Kutch, Landmark, L'Angevin, Lynmar, McPhail, Patz & Hall, Roessler, Siduri, Sojourn, Tandem and Zepaltas.