



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

The Holy Trinity of Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

The name Pisoni is synonymous with Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir and the three Santa Lucia Highlands vineyards that the Pisoni family farms including Pisoni Vineyard, Garys' Vineyard, and Rosella's Vineyard (the latter two in partnership with Gary Francscioni) have become the Holy Trinity of Pinot Noir vineyards in this region. Like the Trinity doctrine, these three vineyards yield Pinot Noir that is often thought of as one whole, but the vineyards are clearly distinct from one another. Think of them as the Father (Pisoni Vineyard), the Son (Garys' Vineyard) and the Holy Spirit (Rosella's Vineyard). The Christian analogy may be a bit far-fetched, but if you are a lover of Pinot Noir, you know that wines from these vineyards can be a revelation.

After years of tasting Pinot Noir from these three vineyards, I decided to try to define each vineyard's distinct character using representative wines from the 2009 vintage. I have acquired a good idea of the differences in the Pinot Noirs from these three sites, but had never sampled a large number of wines side-by-side at one sitting. I gathered winemakers Jeff Pisoni (Pisoni, Lucia) and Jeff Fink (Tantara), and some of my wine loving friends together one day in February 2012, at the Pacific Club in Newport Beach, California, and the following report details the group's consensus after the tasting. Before presenting the tasting notes and the group's general impressions, some background is in order.

Monterey County is a very large wine region with 42,000 acres planted, only slightly less vineyard acreage than Napa Valley's 43,000 acres. 75% of Monterey County grapes are sent out of the county to be incorporated into wines from Napa and Sonoma counties that often state the wine origin as "California" on the label. This trend is slowly changing as Monterey County gains more cachet among consumers, and leading this charge is the Santa Lucia Highlands, an appellation within the larger Monterey County appellation, where more grower-producers have emerged. The Santa Lucia Highlands takes its name from the Santa Lucia Mountains which stretch more than 100 miles from Monterey south to San Luis Obispo.

Pinot Noir thrives in the northern parts of Monterey County including the Carmel Valley, Chalone, Arroyo Seco and Santa Lucia Highlands appellations. The plum of Monterey County is the Santa Lucia Highlands, which sits directly west of the low-lying vegetable growing plains of the Salinas Valley. The maritime climate resulting from the nearby Monterey Bay is well suited for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, which together represent 78% of the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation's approximate 6,100 acres of plantings. Pinot Noir accounts for about 47 percent of vineyard acreage (2,800 acres) in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Pinot Noir from the Santa Lucia Highlands is both appellation and vineyard designated.



Winegrower Gary Pisoni is the ambassador for the Santa Lucia Highlands and for good reason. Not only is he a colorful character, his Pisoni Vineyard was the first to bring notoriety to the region. He comes from a generation of farmers who tended row crops in the Salinas Valley long before he was born. Gary enjoyed drinking and collecting French wines, especially those from Bordeaux, during his college days at San Jose State. When he graduated, he was eager to find a way into the wine business. When he told his father, Eddie Pisoni, he wanted to plant grapevines on the family cattle ranch in the Santa Lucia Highlands, he was met with several objections, not the least of which was the cost. Gary countered to his father, "Have you ever been to a \$250 lettuce tasting?" Gary's father relented and a legendary vineyard was born in 1982.

Gary planted his vines in virgin decomposed granite, gravelly loam soil at 1,300 feet above the Salinas Valley at the southern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation. The ranch land had been acquired by Eddie and his spouse Jane in 1979, a 280-acre plot in a region the Spaniards called *Eternidad Pariso*. The region is very dry (12 to 18 inches of rainfall per year), and it was a challenge to find water. Gary had to dig five wells before discovering a water source in 1991. The previous ten years, he had trucked in water from the valley floor for irrigation. The original 5 acres of vines have been rumored to be Samsonite cuttings from a famous domaine in Vosne-Romanee (? La Tache), and are now called the Pisoni clone or selection. Dijon clones 828, 777 and 115 were added to Pisoni Vineyard over time.

In the mid 1990s, Gary teamed with boyhood friend, Gary Francioni, a lifelong resident of Gonzales in the Salinas Valley who has been farming crops in the region since graduating from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. The pair were born but five weeks apart and shared toy tractors as toddlers. Together, they planted and now farm Garys' Vineyard, Rosella's Vineyard, and the newest vineyard, Soberanes, which was established in 2006 and is adjacent Garys' Vineyard. Gary Francioni also has a new Santa Lucia Highlands vineyard that was planted in 2007-2008, Sierra Mar, one of the highest altitude vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Gary Francioni also has his own wine label, Roar, in partnership with winemaker Ed Kurtzman.

Gary Pisoni's son, Mark, who has a B.S. degree in Agricultural Economics from University of California at Davis and a Master's Degree in Farm Business Management from Cornell University, now directs the farming of Pisoni Vineyard as well as the Pisoni vegetable growing operation which dates to 1946. Mark presides over the same 15-person crew that has hand-tended the vines at Pisoni Vineyard for over ten years. He also

manages Garys' and Soberanes vineyards in conjunction with Gary Francioni. All three vineyards that Mark farms are SIP (Sustainability in Practice) certified by the Central Coast Vineyard Team.

A second son, Jeff, is a graduate of California State University Fresno in enology, and took over the winemaker duties for the Pisoni family labels, Pisoni and Lucia, in 2002. Jeff and Mark created the Pisoni label, releasing the first estate Pinot Noir in 1998. The second label, Lucia, debuted in 2000. The photo below shows the Pisoni clan taken for their 2012 calendar.



Nothing is better than gathering with loved ones.
Thank you for joining us at the table by sharing our Pisoni and Lucia wines.

*Jane Gary Bibiana Davis Susan Quinn
Magastie Jeff Mark AveryAnn*

The success of the Santa Lucia Highlands winegrowing region is a result of three weather related factors that lead to proper ripening of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Nearly every day in the summer, fog from the Monterey Bay rolls in and blankets the entire Salinas Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands. The fog stays until late morning and returns late in the day. Monterey Bay acts like a large funnel for the prevailing winds off the Pacific Ocean and by mid afternoon there are strong winds rushing down the Salinas Valley, cooling the vines. The winds not only cool, they dry the clusters and help to reduce disease pressure. Bright, mild sunshine appears in the late morning and because the entire appellation faces towards the East, the vineyards are bathed in this gentle sun. Hot afternoon sun is largely avoided due to the protection afforded by the Santa Lucia Mountain range which blocks the setting sun. This geography in combination with the fog and cooling winds means that temperatures rarely exceed 90°F. Daily afternoon temperatures are lower on the northern end of the appellation, and slightly warmer on the southern end. Diurnal swings in temperature are more extreme for vineyards at higher elevations.

The two photos below are views of the Santa Lucia Highlands. The upper photo shows a dense blanket of fog in the evening. The lower photo was taken at noon and shows how the fog has receded.



Vineyard Profiles

The vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands are planted on the southeastern slopes of the highlands overlooking the Salinas Valley. The vineyards are highly visible as one drives along Highway 101 south of Salinas. A vineyard map of the appellation follows the vineyard profiles.

Rosella's Vineyard

Initial planting date: 1996; planted over 7 years (1996-2003).

Acres: 50.

Elevation: 400'.

Soil: Deep Arroyo Seco sandy loam.

Varieties: Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah.

Pinot Noir clones: 667, 777, Pisoni, Pommard, 828. VSP Unilateral trellising.

Chardonnay clones: 76, 95, 96.

Spacing 5' x 8'.

Owners: Gary and Rosella Francioni who live at the vineyard with sons Adam and Nick, Gary Pisoni, August West.

Wineries sourcing fruit: A.P. Vin, August West, Kosta Browne, Loring Wine Co., Miner, Morgan, Pelerin, Roar, Siduri, Testarossa, Vision Cellars.



Garys' Vineyard

Initial planting date: 1997.

Acres: 50.

Elevation: 400'-500'.

Soil: Arroyo Seco sandy loam with sub surface rock in certain sections. Rocky soils contribute more acidity which dictates picking beyond 24° Brix.

Varieties: Pinot Noir, Syrah. North-south configuration.

Pinot Noir clones: Pisoni, Swan. VSP Bilateral trellising.

Spacing 5' x 8', 6' x 8'.

Owners: Gary Pisoni, Gary Francioni.

Wineries sourcing fruit: A.P. Vin, Capioux, Kosta Browne, Lucia, Loring Wine Co., Miner, Morgan, Miura, Roar, Siduri, Surh Luchtel, Tantara, Truckee River, Vision Cellars.



Pisoni Vineyard

Initial planting date: 1982.

Acres: 45, 11 individual blocks curve to the contours of the mountain.

Elevation: 1,300'. Much higher than a majority of vineyards in the AVA; more protected from fog and winds.

Occasionally above the fog line entirely. A wilderness area teeming with mountain lions, coyotes, wild pigs, rabbits, gophers, rattlesnakes and birds.

Soil: Decomposed granite, gravelly loam. Very lean soil and vines struggle to reach full canopy size.

Varieties: Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah.

Pinot Noir clones, Pisoni, 828, 777, 115; VSP Unilateral trellising.

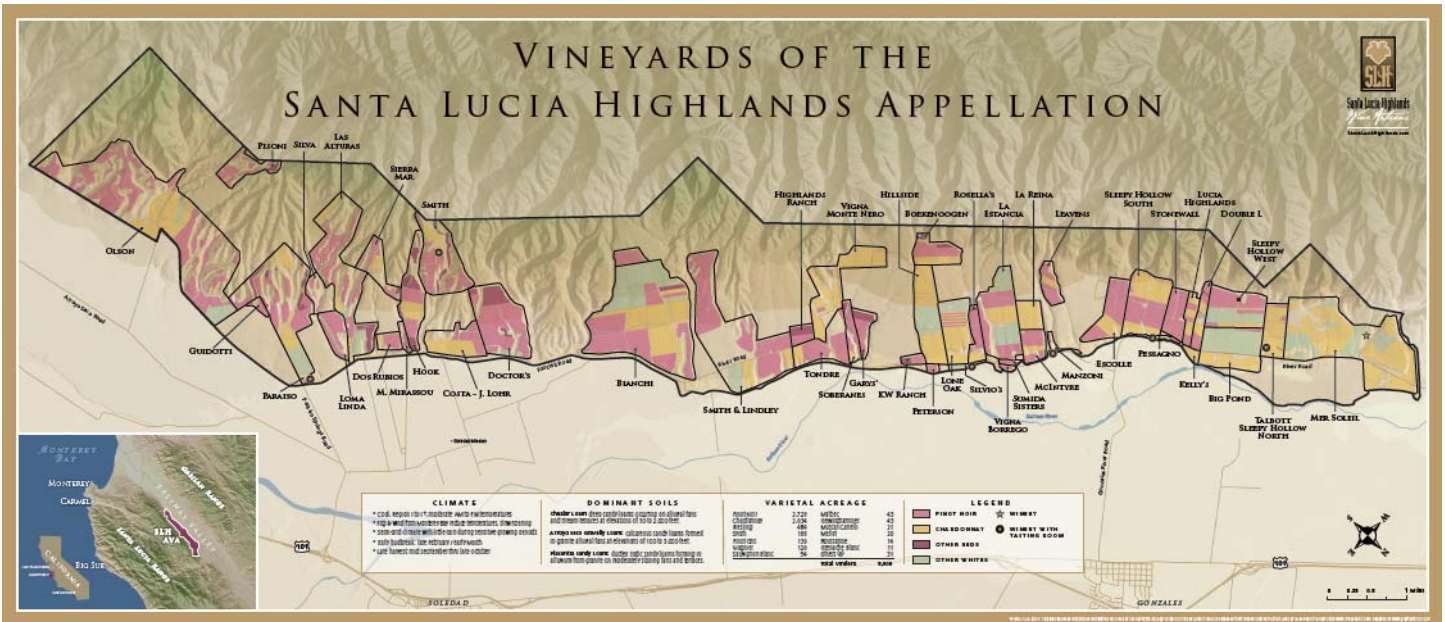
Spacing: 6' x 10', 5' x 8', 4' x 6'.

Owners: Pisoni family.

Wineries sourcing fruit: Arcadian, Bernardus, Capioux, Kosta Browne, Miura, Patz & Hall, Paul Lato, Peter Michael, Roar, Siduri, Tantara, Testarossa..



A vineyard map of the Santa Lucia Highlands is below. To view a larger image of this map, visit www.santaluciahighlands.com and go to the Trade & Press section. Zoom to actual size for best visibility. Pisoni Vineyard is on the far left (south), with Garys' Vineyard and Rosella's Vineyard in the more northerly part of the highlands at less elevation.



The Comparative Tasting

Wineries which source fruit from these vineyards specify individual farming preferences and the timing of picking, so each winery's fruit from the same vineyard is not identical. In addition, age of vines, clonal mix, soils and microclimate will vary. Throw in the wide range of winemaking practices, and there is a range of character and styles shown by the Pinot Noirs produced from any one of these vineyards. That said, our group found a clear difference in the wines from each vineyard in 2009 regardless of the producer, and valuable generalities can be made. I believe that the reader will gain enough knowledge to understand differences in bottles of Pinot Noir from each of these three Santa Lucia Highlands vineyards and thereby make appropriate buying decisions. The emphasis in this tasting was not on judging the wines as to comparative preferences and quality, but on finding differences in wine characteristics such as color, fruit type, aromas and flavors (other than oak), acidity, tannins, and finish. In other words, discovering terroir-based features.

The wines were all tasted single blind except a couple of wines I tasted at home after the event and these tasting notes are so designated. All wines were properly stored after winery or retail purchase and tasted in appropriate Burgundy stemware over the course of a few hours in the late morning, initially without, and later with, appropriate food. All wines were opened and poured about an hour before the tasting to permit the wines adequate exposure to air.

As a side note, it was impressive, but not unexpected, that both Jeffs were able identify their own Pinot Noirs at the conclusion of the blind tasting.



Rosella's Vineyard

2009 ROAR Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Moderately light in color. Demure red fruits and dried herbs on the nose. Lighter weight red and blue fruits on the palate with mild, fine tannins, good acidity, and a touch of heat on the finish.*

2009 Miner Family Winery Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Lightest and reddest color in the lineup. Aromas of slightly confected cherries and oak spice. Delicate in weight, with discrete flavors of red cherries and berries, and oak-driven herbs and spice including cinnamon. Soft tannins, bright acidity.*

2009 August West Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
Moderately light reddish-purple color. Shy aromas of purple fruits with a touch of oak and cut flowers. Medium weight flavors of dark red and purple fruits offering an appealing lusciousness on the palate augmented by soft, fine-grain tannins and good acidity.



2009 A.P. Vin Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
Moderately light in color. More savory and woody on the nose with bright red cherry and red berry fruit aromas. The most extracted wine with substantial plush red fruits wrapped in soft tannins and accented by oak spice.



2009 Loring Wine Co. Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
Darkest color in the lineup. Very ripe fruited, almost prune-like on the nose. Dark, ripe stone fruits with a healthy tannic backbone. Difficult to discover terroir-based features in this wine.

2009 Kosta Browne Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
Slightly confected dark red cherries and berries with a floral note. Moderately rich with layers of red fruits, picking up interest and intensity over time in the glass, offering a lengthy finish highlighted by oak spice.



Garys' Vineyard

2009 ROAR Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
Moderate reddish-purple color. Aromatic with scents of fresh cherries and dried herbs. Middleweight flavors of juicy black cherries with a hint of savory herbs. Delicious and beautifully balanced with supple tannins and good acidity. Exceptional.

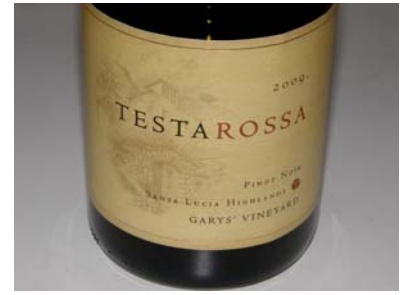


2009 Tantara Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
Moderate reddish-purple color. Aromas of black cherries, dried rose petals and crusty brioche. Delicious black raspberry and black cherry core wrapped in silky tannins, and displaying bright acidity on the long finish. Also exceptional.



2009 Testarossa Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

Moderate reddish-purple color. Very fragrant with aromas of dark red cherries and currants. Well-endowed with the essence of black cherries and good integration of oak. Nicely crafted, with mild tannins and lively acidity on the uplifting finish.



2009 Lucia Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Darkest in color of the lineup. Layers of darker red and purple fruits on the nose with a subtle note of oak. Delicious, slightly sweet, with a healthy tannic backbone. More extraction and structure than the other wines in the lineup, but not in a negative way. Exceptional.*



2009 Capioux Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Moderate reddish-purple color. The nose offers black fruits with prominent oak and coffee notes. Luscious black plum core with balanced tannins, a velvety texture and long fruit-driven finish.*

2009 Morgan Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Medium reddish-purple color. Riper, deep red fruit profile with a savory herbal underpinning on the nose and palate. Pushes the ripeness envelope. Moderate tannins and soft in the mouth.*

2009 Miner Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of strawberries, herb garden, sandalwood and baking spice. A lighter-styled wine with a core of red cherries and strawberries, accompanied by hints of red licorice and herbs. Very supple tannins, with appealing finesse and charm. Exceptional, and very distinct in style from other more fruit-driven wines in this flight. (Tasted separately)*



2009 Kosta Browne Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose and palate is flush with very ripe plum and blackberry fruit. Moderately full-bodied with ripe, firm tannins and impressive length on the fruit-driven finish. The soft texture is appealing. Picks up interest over time in the glass. (Tasted separately)*

Pisoni Vineyard

2009 Peter Michael Le Moulin Rouge Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Dark reddish-purple color. Huge nose with penetrating aromas of black berries with a hint of vanilla. Lip-smacking core of slightly sweet black and purple fruits. Almost syrupy with velvety tannins and impressive persistence on the finish which reveals a bit of heat. Very hedonistic and hard to ignore. The most approachable Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noir in the lineup. Exceptional.*



2009 Tantara Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Deep, dark reddish-purple color. Brooding initially, opening up nicely over time in the glass. Copious aromas of dark red and black stone fruits with a hint of green herbs. Relatively closed on the palate, but offering a glimpse of dense, perfectly ripe fruit wrapped in soft tannins and augmented by oak.*

2009 Siduri Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Dark reddish-purple color. The fruit takes a back seat to oak at this stage. Still earthy, raw and rugged, but showing enough gorgeous black fruit and lively acidity to indicate huge upside potential. Needs a few years in bottle to shed its tannins.*

2009 Capioux Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Deep, dark reddish-purple color. The nose is marked by strong reduction which never fully resolves during the tasting. Rugged and tannic with shy black fruit at this stage. Challenging to evaluate.*

2009 Paul Lato “Lancelot” Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Moderately dark reddish-purple color. Very appealing aromas of black raspberry jam and Hoison sauce. Delicious core of well-ripened black fruits with nicely proportioned tannins and enough acidity to bring the fruit to life. Unbelievably long finish. Exceptional.*



2009 Pisoni Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir *Very dark reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is wild and savory, with hi-tone dark red and black cherries and berries with notes of dried herbs and mushrooms. The massive fruit core is buried in tannins and oak at this stage. The fruit becomes more expressive very slowly over time in the glass. The wine is much more accommodating with food.*



Terroir-Based Features of the Three Vineyards

Rosella's Vineyard

Color: lighter, more red tones.

Structure: lighter weight, more elegant, more feminine.

Texture: silky to velvety.

Acidity: middle.

Tannins: mild to moderate.

Aromas: fruit, dried herbs, flowers, spice.

Flavors: redder fruits of relatively mild intensity, herbs, spice.

Comment: The wines showed more inconsistency and as a whole, were less appealing and interesting than the wines from the other two vineyards. There were no exceptional wines in this vintage among the wines tasted.

Garys' Vineyard

Color: medium reddish-purple; intermediate between Rosella's and Garys' vineyards.

Structure: middleweight to full-bodied.

Texture: juicy, silky.

Acidity: plenty of acidity but doesn't stand out.

Tannins: moderate but refined.

Aromas: dark red to black fruits, more fruity than floral, most expressive aromatics.

Flavors: dark red to black fruits, moderately intense and layered, complex.

Comment: The Garys' Vineyard wines were more interesting, and practically every wine, regardless of producer, was of high quality (consistency). The wines exhibit vibrancy and energy attributable to acidity. The challenge at this vineyard is that as sugars climb, acidity stalls, but this can usually be dealt with and probably is a "good thing."

Pisoni Vineyard

Color: deeper, darker reddish-purple to almost black.

Structure: dense, thick, big, rugged.

Texture: dense, grainy.

Acidity: variable.

Tannins: most tannin.

Aromas: slowest to evolve aromatically; black stone fruits and berries, brambly.

Flavors: dark red and black fruit and plenty of it but not jammy; earthy, savory.

Comment: The Pisoni site is distinct from the two other vineyards which are at a lower elevation and relatively close to each other. The Pisoni Vineyard is more gravelly, with less wind exposure and therefore warmer. Tannin levels were very high in 2009. The taster must work harder to appreciate the wines. The wines are not especially expressive early and should be given time to age. Highly enjoyable with foods that mute the tannins (ie cheese or protein like steak).

PinotFile Reader C.J. Newton “Uncorks”

C.J. Newton recently sent me a song written about Pinot Noir and I have included both the poem and the story behind it in the writer’s own words.

C.J. Newton is a writer living in Petaluma, California, who loves Pinot Noir and speaking French. Author of the novel *Costa Azul*, he contributed “Serendipity and the Writer” to *The Writer* magazine and won a prize in the Shasta Poetry Festival of 2003. His other novels include *Horse of the Emerald Isle*, retelling the King of Arthur legend from the viewpoint of an Irish horse.

A childhood visit to Montreal set in motion his study of French starting in the seventh grade. Moving to San Francisco by age 21, he began his discovery of wine tasting. Travel to Paris acquainted C.J. with Muscadet, Côtes de Rhone, and Chateauneuf-du-Pape. Residence in New Orleans completed his personal French tricolor of France-Quebec-Louisiana which gives the Gallic inspiration to his musical and literary compositions.

In 2007, after Hurricane Katrina, C.J. went to New Orleans as a voluntourist. His first assignment was to march in a French Quarter neighborhood parade on Bastille Day with a blue balloon. Prowling the Quarter, he was inspired to write a screenplay called *Batting Second*, about “New Orleans, Baseball, Love and Ghosts.” Frequent crossing Toulouse Street, he gave the main character, a left-handed screwball pitcher, the name Screw Loose Toulouse.

Screw Loose finds help turning around his team, the Orleans Blue Sox, by listening to a baseball player-manager ghost from the 1930s. On his visits back in time, he falls in love with a woman from the past named Elizabeth Delacroix, a love that can never be. But they enjoy a romantic date and hear a song in a cabaret sung by a chanteuse in French and English: “Pinot Noir.”

C.J. actually wrote that song as a contribution to the Pinot Noir Festival of 2008 hosted by retailer Vine and Barrel in Petaluma. “It came to me in French first,” he says, “And then I translated back into English.” He laughs, “Since I’m a screenwriter, I can write one of my own songs into the script. Why not?”

New Orleans continues to inspire him. In 2011, a stay on Orleans Street produced the song “Bonsoir Mon Rêve. Bonsoir Ma Merveille.” In 2010, C.J. ran with the “NOLA Bulls (www.nolabulls.com), which is an annual recreation of the Pamplona event. The organizer can’t use real bulls, so they use the next best thing: roller derby girls wearing horned helmets, armed with plastic bats. Sporting red beret, sash, white shirt and pants, C.J. made it a few blocks but was cut down before Canal Street, bored by a roller girl named Boom.

In Petaluma his favorite places to enjoy wine are the Vine and Barrel and La Dolce Vita Wine Lounge. He likes the rustic country French atmosphere of the Vine and Barrel, and the glamorous romantic lighting in La Dolca Vita.

He concludes, “Baseball and wine are similar, they exude lore. You remember the place and time you try an appellation the first time, like a ballplayer’s first at bat. Wine connects you with history, including your own life story.” To view free links to all of C.J.’s works, visit www.BattingSecond.Wordpress.com.

When you read the song, imagine someone in a cabaret, accompanied by an accordion, singing it in a style like Maurice Chevalier. The song is included in a screenplay registered with the Writer’s Guild in Los Angeles called, “*Batting Second, A Story of Baseball, New Orleans, Love & Ghosts, Featuring Screw Loose Toulouse.*”

| Pinot Noir | Pinot Noir |
|---|--|
| <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir! Je ferai du bon temps ce soir, Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, Le petit vin avec pouvoir!</p> | <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, Music in the bottle every time. Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, You are the taste of all good times.</p> |
| <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, Chansons dans la bouteille chaque fois Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, Tu es plus qu'une jolie façade!</p> | <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir! The perfect wine to have with lunch. Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, The little wine that packs a punch!</p> |
| <p>Le seul vin pour moi Comme aujourd'hui et hier soir</p> | <p>The only wine that is for me Like today and yesterday</p> |
| <p>C'est le rêve C'est très beau C'est l'idée Et sont les mots Du bon temps: C'est Pinot Noir!</p> | <p>It's the dream It's so fine The definition Of good times Are these words: It's Pinot Noir!</p> |
| <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Je me dis de toi, "Quelle étoile!" Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Tu m'as donné beaucoup d'espoir.</p> | <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, I say to you, "Hey, what a star!" Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, You're celebrated now near and far!</p> |
| <p>Le seul vin pour moi Comme aujourd'hui et hier soir</p> | <p>The only wine that is for me Like today and yesterday</p> |
| <p>C'est le rêve! C'est très beau! C'est l'idée! Et sont les mots Du bon temps: C'est Pinot Noir!</p> | <p>It's the dream! It's so fine! The definition Of good times! Are these words: It's Pinot Noir!</p> |
| <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir C'est vrai que tu me donnes l'espoir. Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Embrasses-moi ma petite Savoir vivre tant romantique Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir!</p> | <p>Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, From sunny California or la France Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Let's kiss now my love And drink to this romance! Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir!</p> |
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Pinot Briefs

Winemaker Theresa Heredia Joins Gary Farrell Winery Theresa Heredia, the long time winemaker at Freestone Vineyards, brought considerable critical acclaim to Freestone Vineyards Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. She made the first vintage of Freestone wines in 2002 when Freestone Vineyards was still an experimental project at Joseph Phelps and later moved to the Sonoma Coast to open the new Freestone Vineyards winery in 2007. Theresa has experience in Burgundy where she worked at Domaine de Montille and trained with renowned winemaker Craig Williams at Joseph Phelps Vineyards in the Napa Valley after starting her career as an enologist for Saintsbury. Theresa replaces Susan Reed as winemaker for Gary Farrell Winery which was founded by Gary Farrell in 1982. Today, Gary Farrell Winery is owned by The Vincraft Group, a fine wine investment company run by wine industry veterans Pete Scott, Walt Klenz and Bill Price. I was very impressed by the wines Theresa crafted at Freestone Vineyards and I anticipate her success will continue. Additional information on the winery is available at www.garyfarrellwinery.com.

Monterey Wine Festival Celebrates 36 Years Now in its 36th year, the Monterey Wine Festival has new additions to its program. Held at the Custom House Plaza in Monterey, CA., the festival kicks off on Friday, June 8, 2012, with a tasting of wines, spirits and beers along with seafood from the Central Bering Sea Fisherman's Association, arrays of cheeses, and charcuterie. On Saturday, June 9, 2012, the celebration continues with The Bartenders Fedora Professional Cocktail Competition Throw Down and more wineries will be pouring along with artisan foods and live music. The finale is a Chowdah Throw Down known as The West Coast Chowder Competition, now in its third year. Chefs from Seattle, San Francisco, Portland and other known chowder destinations will compete against Monterey's local titans of chowder. Wines that pair with chowders will be offered. Pinot Noir winery participants include Alexander Valley Vineyards, Calcareous, Clos La Chance, Irony, Lockwood Vineyard, Michaud Vineyard, Opolo Vineyards, and Summerland Winery. For more information and tickets, visit www.montereywine.com. Check out Facebook pages: Monterey Wine Festival Company and West Coast Chowder Competition.

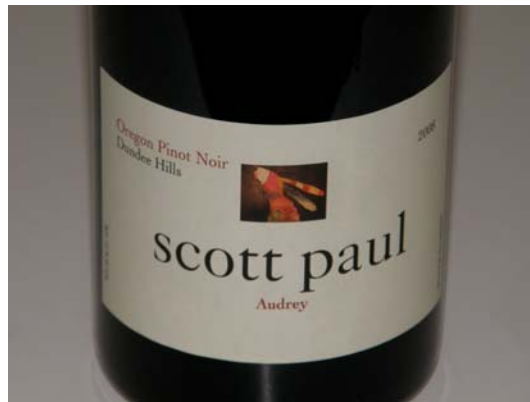
Twomey Cellars Release Day Party The annual event will be held Saturday, April 28, 2012, at both Healdsburg and Calistoga facilities. The 2010 Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, and Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs and 2011 Sauvignon Blanc will be released. The wines will be matched to wood fired oven pizza by the winery's in house chefs. Cost is \$25. The 2009 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir was named "Runner Up" out of 60 Pinot Noirs entered in the recent Pigs & Pinot Pinot Cup blind tasting competition held in Healdsburg. Contact www.twomeycellars.com for tickets.



Arista Winery Buys Famed Martinelli Road Vineyard The McWilliams family has announced that Arista Winery has acquired the historic 74-acre Martinelli Road Vineyard near Forestville in the Russian River Valley. The acquisition adds to the winery's existing 36-acre Westside Road Estate. The Martinelli Road Vineyard is planted to 5 acres of 130-year-old Zinfandel vines, 10 acres of 30+-year-old Chardonnay vines, and 3 acres of 20+-year-old Pinot Noir vines. The site lies in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Ulises Valdez oversees the day-to-day vineyard operations. Arista will begin producing estate-designated Zinfandel,

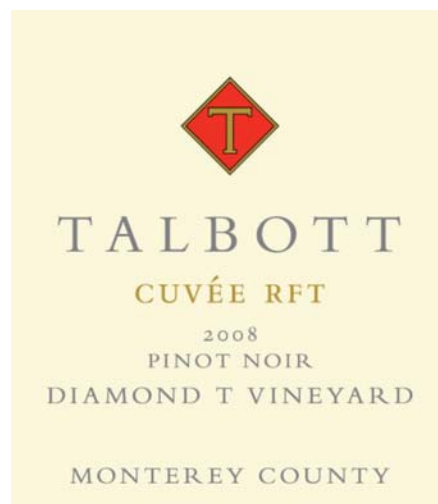
Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Martinelli Road Vineyard beginning with the 2012 harvest. Visit the website at www.aristawinery.com for pictures and more information.

Scott Paul Releases 2010 Audrey Pinot Noir Much of this iconic wine was sold as futures, but the winery still has about 60 cases available for purchase now. A Release Party will be held in Scott Paul's Tasting Room in Carlton on Saturday, April 21, 2012. Audrey is the winery's selection of the best-of-the-best each year, the favorite seven barrels of the vintage. Audrey is named after and inspired by the timeless icon of natural beauty, elegance, and grace - the late Ms. Hepburn. This is consistently one of Oregon's most sought-after and highest scoring wines every year since its debut. The 2010 Audrey is entirely from old vine vineyards in the Dundee Hills: 6 barrels from Maresh Vineyard and 1 barrel from Nysa Vineyard. The wine was fermented in a custom-made Taransaud French Oak open top tank, and no yeasts or other additions were made. The wine was aged in French oak for 11 months (two new oak barrels) and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered at 13.1% alcohol on September 7, 2011. Price is \$69 (5% discount for 6). Scott Paul is the only winery in the states also offering a full line of imported red and white Burgundies for sale. To purchase, visit www.scottpaul.com.



Talbott Vineyards Wins Charlie Palmer's Pigs & Pinot Ultimate Pinot Smackdown

16 of the world's best Pinot Noirs were entered into this smackdown held March 24, 2012, at Charlie Palmer's Seventh Annual Pigs & Pinot Celebration. The 2012 Smackdown was hosted by master sommeliers Keith Goldston, Fred Dame, Drew Hendricks and William Sherer, with each selecting four of their favorite Pinot Noirs from around the globe for the competition. The 2009 Talbott Cuvée RFT Diamond T Vineyard Pinot Noir was entered by Fred Dame, and survived four rounds of head-to-head, audience-judged tastings, beating out the other 15 entrants. The wine was crafted by winemaker Dan Karlsen, a Pinot Noir and Chardonnay specialist with over 30 years of winemaking experience. Like all the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays in the Talbott portfolio (Talbott, Logan and Kali Hart labels), the Talbott Cuvée RFT Pinot Noir was made exclusively from Talbott's estate grapes. Talbott Vineyards was established in 1982, when founder Robb Talbott planted the Diamond T Vineyard in Monterey. The Talbott Vineyards estate program also includes the famed Sleepy Hollow Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands. For more information, visit www.talbottvineyards.com.



Anderson Valley Winegrowers Host 15th Annual Pinot Noir Festival Tickets are now on sale for the Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival to be held May 18-20, 2012. Friday's day-long Technical Conference is aimed at members of the trade and avid Pinot Noir consumers. The Conference will include a Boonville versus "Deep-End" Pinot Noir tasting moderated by Rajat Parr of the Michael Mina Group, a Cerise Vineyard focus tasting, and more. The Technical Conference will be followed by an outdoor barbecue at Hursch Vineyards accompanied by plenty of Pinot Noir. The Grand Tasting at Goldeneye Winery in Philo on Saturday will highlight 40 producers pouring Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. Pinot Noirs will be paired with classic Mexican dishes like fig mole chicken and a group of local women will be making fresh salsas and tortillas during the event. There will also be live music and a silent auction to benefit the Anderson Valley Health Center and Hendy Woods State Park. The list of participating wineries is impressive including a number of my favorites such as Balo Vineyards, Baxter Winery, Black Kite Cellars, Champ de Reves, Claudia Springs, Copain Wines, Couloir Wines, Drew Family Wines, Elke Vineyards, Esterlina Vineyards, Foursight Wines, Fulcrum Wines, Goldeneye Winery, Greenwood Ridge Vineyards, Handley Cellars, Harmonique Wines, Husch Vineyards, Littorai, Londer Vineyards, MacPhail Family Wines, Maggy Hawk Vineyard, Navarro Vineyards, and Twomey Cellars. On Saturday evening, local wineries will host four winemaker dinners in Anderson Valley and on the Mendocino Coast. The weekend will conclude on Sunday with open houses at Anderson Valley wineries, many of which are not open to the public. For additional information and tickets, visit www.avwines.com. This event sells out every year: you have been warned not to procrastinate!



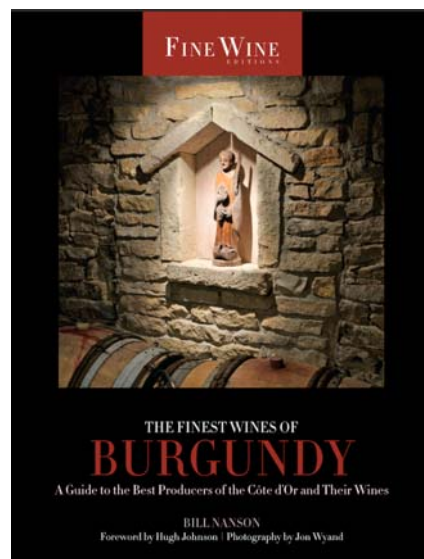
Storyteller Wine Company Michael Alberty is the owner of this small wine retailer in Portland, Oregon. What sets this store apart is the small production wines that Michael carefully and personally selects. He sends out an online newsletter that relates a colorful story about the wines offered and is a compelling read for wine enthusiasts. Be careful, however, as Michael is a convincing wine pimp with a way with words, and after reading the newsletter, you are at risk of developing a strong urge to purchase the featured wine(s) by the case. If you happen to live in Portland, regular wine tastings are also offered with wines from all over the world as well as Oregon. One thing is for certain: Michael only recommends wines that he himself would be happy to drink. Sign up for the newsletter at www.storytellerwine.com.



Wine & Spirits 23rd Annual Restaurant Poll The list of restaurant's top 50 wineries was compiled by asking restaurateurs to list the ten wines that sold best during the last three months of 2011. The top four were Cakebread Cellars, Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards, Jordan Vineyard & Winery, and Duckhorn Vineyards. The top Pinot Noir producer was Belle Glos which shot from #50 last year to #15 this year. Other Pinot Noir wineries making the list were Emeritus Winery (#22), Flowers Winery (#23), Merry Edwards (#24), Adelsheim Vineyard (#28), Au Bon Climat (#32), Patz & Hall (#41), Westrey (#48), Fess Parker (#49), and Kistler Vineyards (#50). Top Pinot Noirs served by the glass were Hahn Monterey Pinot Noir (#3), Belle Glos Meiomi Pinot Noir (#8), Copain Tours Ensemble Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (#9), A to Z Oregon Pinot Noir (#12), Evening Land Vineyards Oregon Pinot Noir (#17), and Ken Wright Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (#23). Pinot Noir remains very popular in restaurants and only Cabernet Sauvignon outsells it. The ten most popular Pinot Noirs include Belle Glos Meiomi Sonoma Coast and Santa Maria Valley Clark & Telephone (#1), La Crema Sonoma Coast, Emeritus Russian River Valley, Evening Land Vineyards Willamette Valley Blue Label and Eola-Amity Hills Seven Springs Vineyard, Ponzi Vineyards Willamette Valley Tavola and Willamette Valley, Four Graces Willamette Valley, Westrey Willamette Valley and Dundee Hills Oracle Vineyard, Domaine Serene Evenstad Reserve and Yamhill Cuvee, Adelsheim Vineyard Willamette Valley, and Domaine Drouhin Willamette Valley. It is interesting that of the 23 most popular restaurant Pinot Noirs, 15 came from Oregon, a significant disproportion in light of the large disparity in number of Pinot Noir producers between Oregon and California. To view the entire report, visit www.wineandspiritsmagazine. I believe *Wine & Spirits* consistently offers very credible, coherent, well-researched and relevant wine articles that are among the best currently offered by wine magazine publishers.

Decanter Weighs in on Pinot Noir The latest issue of Decanter is devoted largely to Pinot Noir. Benjamin Lewin MW, the author of *In Search of Pinot Noir*, listed 12 Pinot Noirs to challenge Burgundy. The list included Calera Jensen Vineyard, Williams Selyem Rochioli Riverblock, and Domaine Drouhin Cuvée Laurène from the United States. Linda Murphy writes on the wonderful 2009 vintage California Pinot Noirs, naming wines from Williams Selyem, Copain, Kutch Wines, Dutton-Goldfield, Littorai, La Crema, La Follette, Sebastiani, Kenwood Vineyards, Cuvaion, Saintsbury, Frank Family Vineyards, DeLoach, Mount Eden Vineyards, Morgan Vineyards, Sequana, Calera, Alta Maria Vineyards, Brewer-Clifton, and Melville Vineyards. No surprises there. The issue includes a very good profile of Domaine Dujac. Visit www.decanter.com.

The Finest Wines of Burgundy This new book by Bill Nanson is published by the acclaimed quarterly magazine *The World of Fine Wine*. Nanson is a highly respected independent commentator on Burgundy who publishes the Burgundy-Report online (www.burgundy-report.com). The book profiles 90 of the most notable Cote d'Or producers and their wines, including relatively unknown producers as well as established stars. To order, visit www.ucpress.edu or www.amazon.com.



Pinot Noir Glasses Evaluated The latest issue of *The World of Fine Wine* features an article titled, "Pinot Noir Glasses A Rounder Whole." Andrew Jefford reports on a tasting of five different wines using 16 different stems designed for Pinot Noir. Each of the three tasters had individual preferences with Andreas

Larsson preferring the Riedel Pinot Noir/Nebbiolo glass, Stephen Reinhardt the Zalto Denk'Art Mundgeblasen Burgunder glass, and Andrew Jefford the Riedel Vinum Pinot Noir and Zalto glasses. Jefford commented, "In sum, the best glasses favored appreciation rather than analysis. Our panel, too, felt that among the two top Riedel glasses, the Vinum Pinot Noir was better suited to the classicism of Burgundy, while the Riedel Pinot Noir/Nebbiolo glass was a better glass for varietal Pinot Noir in general." The thinner glass stems had more aesthetic appeal, but the thicker glass stems are more durable. Visit www.finewinemag.com.

Pinot Leaf Curl A curling of Pinot Noir leaves known as Pinot Leaf Curl (PLC) often appears after a cool spell and has been observed with increasing frequency among Pinot Noir vineyards in Sonoma County. The affected leaves may die and fall off or persist curled under, and death of a shoot may ensue. Botrytis may be associated, but is not the cause and fungicides have no treatment value. *Wines & Vines* (April 2012) reports that researchers are attempting to analyze this curious sickness. The disease has been found in every Pinot Noir growing region in California and is more common during cool springs. A panel at Sonoma County Grape Day on February 16, 2012, said that research is aimed at measuring levels of nitrogen compounds in Pinot Noir vineyards, concerned that putrescine, a toxic compound produced during nitrogen metabolism in the vine, may be elevated in affected vines. Visit www.winesandvines.com.

Memorial Day Wine Tasting in Willamette Valley Home to more than 190 wineries and tasting rooms and surrounded by beautiful vistas and views of the Cascade Mountains, the Willamette Valley is a pinot geeks Disneyland. Many small, family owned wineries are only open to the public on Memorial Day and Thanksgiving weekends making these weekends very popular. The 22nd Memorial Weekend in the Wine Country will be held May 26-28, 2012. For a touring map and guide and a list of activities at each winery, email the Willamette Valley Wineries Association at info@willamettewines.com.

Santa Lucia Highlands Gala VI The winegrowers of the Santa Lucia Highlands are sponsoring a tasting at Mer Soleil Winery, 1290 River Road, Salinas, on Saturday, May 19, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. The setting will be the Barrel Cellar at Mer Soleil, a dramatic venue not normally open to the public. Food, music and a unique silent auction with many rare, large format bottles will also be offered. The pouring roster of thirty wineries include Santa Lucia Highlands releases of August West, Belle Glos, Bernardus, Boekenoogen, Hahn, J. Lohr, Kori, La Rochelle, Lucienne, Mansfield-Dunne, Manzoni, McIntyre, Mer Soleil, Mooney, Morgan, Novy, Paraiso, Pelerin, Pessagno, Pisoni, Poppy, Puma Road, Roar, Sequana, Siduri, Talbott, Testarossa, Tondre, Tudor and Wrath. This is the only Santa Lucia Highlands public event of the year. For information and tickets, visit www.santaluciahighlands.com.

Littorai Debuts New Website To be honest, for many years Littorai's website lacked information and interest and did not do justice to the superb Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays of Ted Lemon. Littorai has now launched a completely new website at www.littorai.com. Current mailing list members can order wines directly on the website which includes vineyard maps, winemaking philosophy, farm and environmental stewardship information and more. As part of this year's West of West Wine Festival in Occidental, CA, on August 3-5, 2012, Littorai will again host a wine dinner paired with Littorai wines on Friday, August 3 at the Littorai Estate property in Sebastopol. The comments I received about last year's Littorai wine dinner were overwhelmingly positive, with Ted pulling out a number of aged wines from his library as the evening evolved. To buy tickets or learn more, visit www.westsonomacoast.com.



ROCO Winery Opens Cellar Beginning April 5, 2012, ROCO Winery welcomes visitors to the cellar to taste and purchase wines direct, 11:00 to 5:00, Thursday through Saturday. Additional days will be added as the weather warms during the summer in the Willamette Valley. ROCO Winery, Ponzi Vineyards and Argyle Winery are hosting the 1st Annual Oregon Cult Pinot Noir Wine Cruise, a 10-night Mediterranean cruise June 25 to July 5, 2012. The cruise will be personally escorted by Dick and Nancy Ponzi and Rollin and Corby Soles. The Oceania cruise line has been voted "Best in the World" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine. For pricing and availability, visit www.foodandwinetrails.com. Other wine related cruises are also listed on this site.

New Zealand Red Wine of the Year Curtis Marsh, writing in *The Wandering Palate* (www.thewanderingpalate.com) is an authority on New Zealand wine. He grew up in New Zealand and is currently a sommelier and wine importer and merchant in Australia. The three regionally defined single vineyard Pinot Noirs of Mount Edward in Central Otago, produced by winemaker Duncan Forsyth, were pronounced "New Zealand Red Wine of the Year" in 2011 by Marsh. The Pinot Noirs included vineyard designates from Morrison Vineyard (Lowburn), Muirkirk Vineyard (Bannockburn) and Stevens Vineyard (Gibbston). Mount Edward was established in 1997 in the Gibbston Valley by a partnership that included Alan Brady, the founding father of Central Otago, John Buchanan, an Otago native, and Forsyth. Mount Edward Pinot Noirs are available at a number of restaurants in the United States including The French Laundry in Napa, Gary Danko in San Francisco, Aureole in Las Vegas, Boulevard in San Francisco, and The Martini House in St. Helena. The wines are distributed in California and New York by Tasman Wine Selections, San Francisco.

Timber-To-Vineyard Conversion Appears Will Be Approved California State officials are close to officially approving the large timber-to-vineyard projects in coastal northwest Sonoma County by Artesa Vineyards and CalPERS. According to the *Press Democrat* (April 6, 2012), several environmental groups plan to challenge the proposal in court.

When to Drink That Pinot Noir? I often get asked, "When is the right time to drink a Pinot Noir?" You cannot drink the wine right after it is bottled because of "bottle shock." If you order the wine from a winery and it is shipped to you, you cannot drink it for at least 6 to 8 weeks because of "shipping shock." After you buy the wine, you may not be able to drink it because of "sticker shock." You need to have a special celebration to drink such an expensive wine. When a special occasion does arise, you may not be able to drink it because it is in a "dumb phase." When you finally find a time worthy to drink the wine, it may have already peaked, and is now on the downslope or in the "senility phase." Best advice? Cellar the wine properly for 2-3 years after buying it, and keep your fingers crossed.



Latest Winegasm

In the Chehalem Mountains sits a small Pinot Noir estate, Privé Vineyard, very French in name and character, but owned by Americans Mark and Tina Hammond. Straddled behind an entrance gate marked by the sign, "Rue de Privé," are two well-groomed one-acre Pinot Noir vineyards visible on the northern and southern side of a home, flanked by a tiny winery, a sport court, a boules (pétanque) court, and lavish plantings of lavender.

Privé Vineyard is essentially a private winery for those lucky enough to be members of the allocation list. Mark is the vineyard steward and Tina is the winemaker, and together they have been producing one of Oregon's few cult Pinot Noirs since 2001. Mark scoffs at the suggestion that he may have to get a real job if a bad vintage severely hampers their income, but muses that he would probably seek employment pumping gas since he loves outdoor jobs. Tina is a self-taught winemaker with a knack for Pinot Noir.

The original Müller-Thurgau vines on the property date to 1980 and are planted in Jory soil. The vines were grafted over to Pinot Noir by the Hammonds in 1995 using Pommard cuttings taken from Patricia Green at Autumn Wind Vineyard. Precision organic viticulture is the rule. Three wines are produced exclusively from estate fruit: le nord, from the upper, northern one acre; le sud, from the lower, southern one acre; a reserve, *Joie de Vivre* (joy of life) crafted in half-barrel quantities and offered in etched bottles.

Beginning in 2010, the Hammonds decided to pull back the vigor of the vines which had been yielding about 1.5 to 2 tons per acre. This resulted in more forward fruit in the wines in 2010 and 2011. Also in 2010, they rolled the dice and delayed harvest until October 27, despite the rains. Tina said, "We would rather miss the vintage than bring in green fruit and try to correct it in the winery." The result is a magnificent wine.

2010 Privé Vineyard le sud Chehalem Mountains AVA Oregon Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., \$65. 100% Pommard, 100% de-stemmed, whole berry fermented in 100% new French oak barrels. *Strikingly aromatic featuring scents of ripe black cherries, black raspberries, black plums, and dark rose petals. Retains aromatic intensity over time in the glass and I am wondering if it is possible to capture this aroma in a perfume. Very polished with moderately rich and glorious black cherry, black raspberry, cassis, and cola flavors with perfect integration of oak, complimentary acidity and soft, ripe tannins. The fruit hangs on like a 3 hour movie you don't want to end. Very plush for a 2010 Oregon Pinot Noir. Still great the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A sensual pleasure that will persuade you to make Pommard your paramour.*

Look for more reviews of Privé Vineyard Pinot Noir and other great Oregon 2009 and 2010 Pinot Noirs in the next issue of the *PinotFile*.