



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Pinot Noir is a finicky grape that likes to play hard to get

Summa Vineyard

“Perhaps the finest California Pinot I have ever had the pleasure of drinking.”
Allen Meadows (Burghound) on the 2004 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Old Vines Pinot Noir

Summa Vineyard was first planted in 1979 by Steve Young on a beautiful ridge top site on Taylor Lane west of the town of Occidental six miles inland from the Pacific coastline on the true Sonoma Coast. Various published sources have incorrectly dated the original plantings to 1975, 1978 (preparation of the Summa Vineyard site for planting occurred in 1978), or 1980. As a reference in time, David Hirsch planted his first vines at Hirsch Vineyard in Cazadero located in the more northerly Sonoma Coast about the same time (1980).

The original approximately 2 acres of vines, which included Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer, were planted to 8' x 12' spacing. The first vines were soon all grafted over to Pinot Noir. Scott and Joan Zeller acquired the vineyard in 1982, live on the property, and have dry-farmed the vineyard to the present time.

The original clones of Pinot Noir planted at Summa Vineyard have been a source of conjecture through the years, as the Zellers either do not know or decline to disclose the plant material origins. Burt Williams, who crafted Summa Vineyard Pinot Noirs from the late 1988 to 1997, suspects the old vines are original Swan clone (selection).

In 1998, an additional 3 acres of Pinot Noir were added on resistant rootstock from old vine cuttings and these plantings are referred to as young vines. In 2000, more Pinot Noir vines (again old vine cuttings) were interplanted among the old vines. In 2005 and 2009, an additional 1.5 acres of Pinot Noir were established (also old vine cuttings), known as the Driveway Block, located on Zeller's current residence property and now leased back to Thomas Rivers Brown, who bought the 1979-2000 Summa Vineyard plantings in September 2010. The recent photo below shows Thomas Brown (leaf pulling) and Scott Zeller in the Summa Vineyard.



This second photo shows a row of original old vines with a row of newer young vine interplantings on the right.



Thomas Rivers Brown, who has become a successful winemaker for numerous prestigious Cabernet Sauvignon producers at the Black Sears and Outpost facilities on Howell Mountain, was given his first winemaking job by Ehren Jordan at Turley Wine Cellars. In 2002, Ehren fortuitously introduced Thomas to Scott and Joan Zeller. Ehren had made his first two barrels of vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Summa Vineyard in 1999, but was not able to rely on that source and had subsequently turned to other sites in the Sonoma Coast region for grapes by 2002.

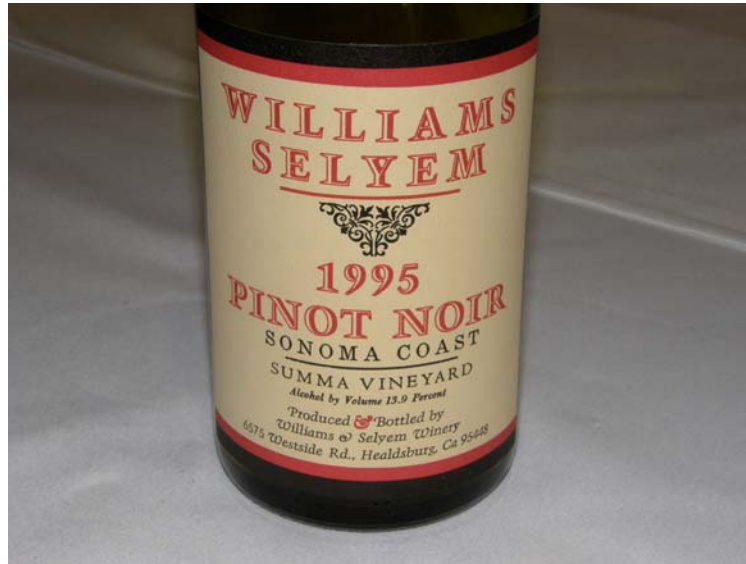
Thomas had no money in 2002 to launch a new Pinot Noir label, and jokes, “Genevieve Marie Walsh (his spouse) and I didn’t have two nickels to rub together.” However, Thomas knew the reputation of the Summa Vineyard and could not pass on the opportunity to make wine from this legendary source. He crafted his first Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir in 2002. Thomas’s propitious decision was to be confirmed two years later when he tasted the 1988 Williams Selyem Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir. Thomas was to remark, “I never tasted anything like it before from California.”

The first wines from Summa Vineyard were produced by the tiny Sea Ridge Winery (now defunct). In the late 1980s, Burt Williams and Ed Selyem were riding their motorcycles in the hills west of Occidental looking for suitable grape sources when they came upon Scott Zeller and Summa Vineyard. Zeller agree to sell them fruit and the first Williams Selyem Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir was released in 1988. The wine was highly lauded and brought Summa Vineyard instant recognition. Yields were typically miniscule and in 1989 and 1990 no usable grapes were harvested. In 1991, a total of one ton of grapes was harvested from the two acres which produced two barrels of wine. The cost of the grapes worked out to be \$5,000 per ton when the farming costs for three years (two of which - 1989 and 1990 - yielded no grapes) were considered.

The Williams Selyem 1991 Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir was offered to the mailing list at \$100 a bottle, the first California Pinot Noir to sell for this lofty price. Williams figured that if people wouldn’t buy it, he and Ed would take it all home and drink it. Williams said about the wine’s price, “C-note or c-none.” The wine sold out in three days. This wine, along with the 1995 Williams Selyem Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir, were among the favorites that Williams produced over the years at Williams Selyem.

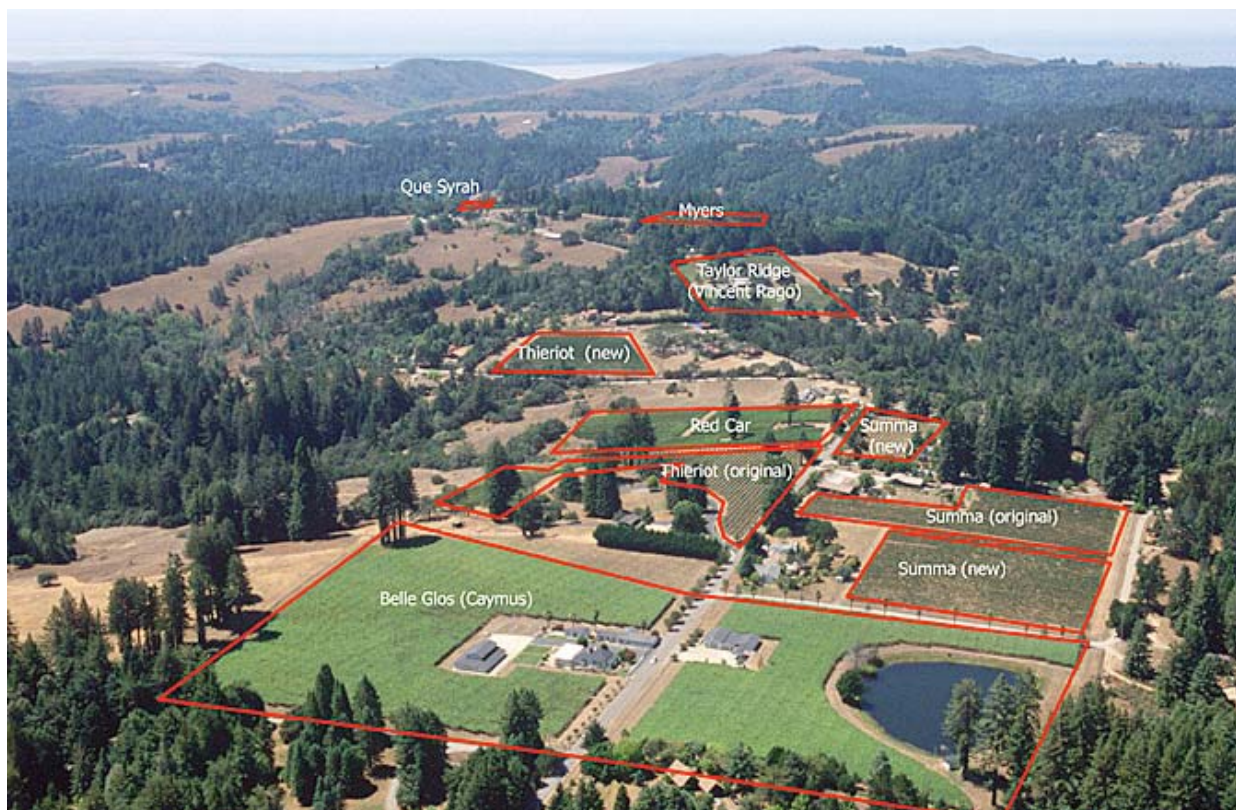
Williams Selyem released a Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir in 1988, 1991, 1993 (a combined Summa Vineyard-Coastlands Vineyard bottling was also produced in this vintage) 1995 and 1997. In 1988-1990 and 1993-1995, declassified lots of Summa Vineyard grapes were sometimes a component of the Williams Selyem Sonoma

Coast bottling. The 1995 Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir sold for \$125, and sold out again within days. The 1995 Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir was a prodigious wine. In the 1997 Williams Selyem Fall Mailer, Ed Selyem's tasting notes were compelling: "Need a dictionary for adjectives. In the last four years, I've re-tasted practically all the best producers' grand cru red Burgundies for vintages well over a decade including 1985s and 1990s. I'm sorry, without prejudice, there has been nothing close to this wine."



After Williams Selyem was sold in 1997, grapes from Summa Vineyard were sold to Mueller Winery (1998-2000), Brogan Cellars (1998-2006), and Littorai (2002-2008). With the acquisition of Summa Vineyard by Rivers-Marie in 2010, the vineyard became a monopole exclusive to Rivers-Marie. Thomas now produces a Summa Vineyard "Young Vines" and "Old Vines" Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir in most vintages. Declassified lots are blended into the Rivers-Marie Sonoma Coast bottling.

A number of prominent vineyards have been planted on Taylor Lane near or adjacent Summa Vineyard including Taylor Lane (Pinot Noir to Boèhme and Belle Glos), B. Theriot (Chardonnay to Littorai and Rivers-Marie, Pinot Noir to Littorai), La Boèhme (a monopole for Red Car Wine Co.), Carl Meyer and Occidental (Pinot Noir to Evening Land), Taylor Ridge, Que Syrah and Maybach.



On June 13, 2012, I organized a retrospective tasting of Summa Vineyard Pinot Noirs. The event was held at Healdsburg's Dry Creek Kitchen, and a number of notable winemakers attended including Thomas Rivers Brown, Burt Williams, Nikolai Stez (Woodenhead), Ben and Yolanda Papapietro (Papapietro-Perry), Ross Cobb (Cobb Wines & Hirsch Vineyards), and Kerith Overstreet (Bruliam Wines).

There were a number of stunning wines in the 18 bottle lineup including the 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010 Old Vines from Rivers-Marie, the 2002 Summa Vineyard and the 2006 Michaela's Reserve from Brogan Cellars, the 2003 and 2005 Littorai wines (a combination of old vines and new vines), and the 1995 from Williams Selyem, which Burt generously donated (one of his last two 750 ml bottles). It was one of the most spectacular Pinot Noir tastings I have ever attended.

The 1995 Williams Selyem Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir was the consensus favorite of those in attendance. Now 17 years old, the wine was incredibly fresh, in part attributable to its remarkable acidity. Burt noted that at harvest the grapes had the following readings: 24.5° Brix, pH 3.09 and TA 0.99. The wine at bottling (Burt never acidified) showed the following: 13.9% alc., pH 3.29 and TA 0.964. There was no stem inclusion and the wine spent 16 months in 100% new Francois Frères French oak. The price upon release as noted previously was \$125 and total production was 52 cases.

Since Margi Weirenga-Williams and Ted Lemon could not attend, I do not have winemaking details for the Brogan Cellars and Littorai wines. The Brogan Cellars wines tended to be bold and richly structured, the Littorai wines (from both old vines and new vines) more restrained and savory. The winemaking regimen for Rivers-Marie was detailed by Thomas as follows. Grapes undergo a cold soak, light punchdowns and spend 18 days on the skins. No acid bumps or additions. No whole cluster (10% in 2010). Aged 10 months in 80%-100% new oak (Remond in 2002 and 2003, Remond and Francois Frères in 2004-2010). Production in 2002 and 2003 was 2 barrels from 0.7 tons of fruit. The wines are unfinned and unfiltered (and show a very slight resulting cloudiness). The Young Vines and Old Vines bottlings share some similarities, but the Old Vines has a broader palate and more depth due to vine age. It is always a wine to contemplate.

Thomas is quite taken by the Old Vines wines from Summa Vineyard. He noted in his newsletter offering the 2009 vintage: "We've run out of original things to say about this wine. Every year we try to figure out where the current bottling ranks among previous editions and this year I am at a loss. I finally have to admit I simply love this vineyard and the wine it produces and leave it at that. There's really nothing we've come across that tastes like it."

My tasting notes of Summa Vineyard wines are summarized below.



2002 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 44 cases. Aged in 100% new French oak. *Very light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, red berry, orange peel, leather and oak. Light and elegant flavors of red strawberries, blood oranges and a hint of oak with slight tannin and bright acidity. Holding, but fruit is beginning the downslope.*



2003 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 44 cases. Aged in 100% new French oak. *Very light garnet color in the glass. Brighter aromas of dark cherries and sandalwood. Elegant, but more body than the 2002 vintage, with pleasing flavors of red berries, cherries, pomegranates, and subtle oak. Fine-grain tannins and some length. Has peaked but will hold a few more years.*

2004 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 60 cases. Aged in 100% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of oak spice, wood shavings and conifer. Tasty core of black cherry fruit with a complimentary hint of oak. Well-structured and still showing some fine-grain tannin, finishing dry with a tart cherry flourish.*

2005 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 1 new quarter barrel, 54 bottles. Not tasted.

2006 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 62 cases. Aged in 100% new French oak. Not tasted.

2007 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., 100 cases, \$60. Aged in 100% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Beguiling aromas of fresh black cherries and spice. Very soft in the mouth, with a delicious core of medium-weight flavors of perfectly ripe cherries and baking spices. Really impresses with depth of flavor which seems to expand into every crevice in the mouth. Well-proportioned tannins and acidity with amazing length on the glorious finish. Poised for many years of exceptional drinking ahead.*



2008 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 175 cases, \$60. Aged in 100% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. On the nose, dark fruits are featured including plums and black cherries with a hint of ash and lime. Delicious black cherry core with very slight creosole and smoke flavors. Moderate dry tannins and very impressive length on the finish.*

2009 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., 106 cases, \$60. Aged in 80% new French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Restrained aromas of black cherries, black plums and seasoned oak. Richly flavored red and black fruits accented with notes of spice, herbs and oak. Very soft in the mouth with a bright cut of acidity on the very long finish. Makes a lasting impression. Still young and hasn't reached its full potential.*

2010 Rivers-Marie Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 137 cases, \$75. Aged in 80% new French oak. Yields just shy of 1 ton per acre. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Big, bold aromas of dark berry jam and black cherries with a hint of dark caramel. Luscious and creamy on the palate with a wave of rather exotic ripe dark berry and plum flavors with hints of spice and toasty oak. Well-balanced tannins and acidity with a long, layered, fruit-filled finish so typical of this vineyard. Tempting now, but best to wait another 3 to 5 years.*

2002 Brogan Cellars Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. *Very light reddish-purple color in the glass. Fresh and holding well with vibrant aromas of dark cherries and toasty oak. Moderately rich flavors of dark red berries and cherries, wrapped in gossamer tannins, and finishing with a fresh, uplifting note of cherries and peppercorns. Still has several years of life ahead.*

2003 Brogan Cellars Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Aged in 75% new French oak. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruit profile with aromas of black plum sauce blackberry jam, and spice. Full-bodied flavors of cassis and currant with notes of brown spice and sassafras. Still showing adequate tannic support for the prodigious fruit.*

2004 Brogan Cellars Young Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 150 cases, \$60. *Moderate reddish-purple color with slight bricking of the rim in the glass. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of grilled plums and toasty oak. Flavors of dark cherries and plum sauce with hints of raisin, fruit leather and oak. Excellent acid spine, but the tannins dominate the fruit.*

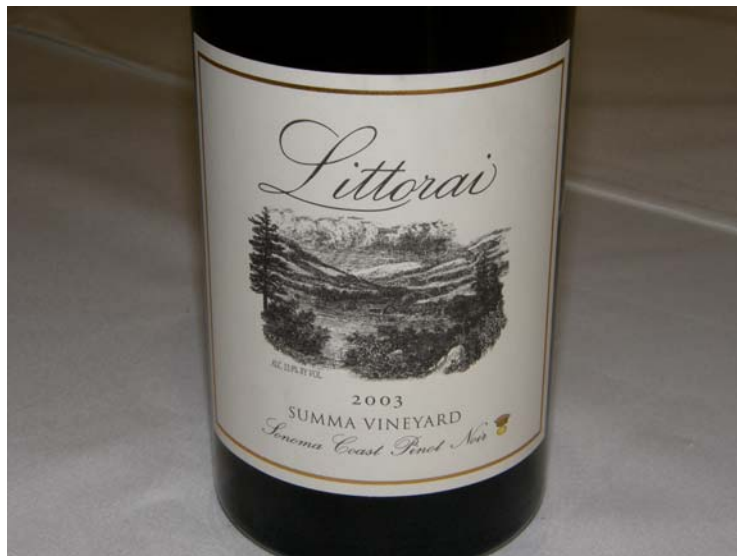
2004 Brogan Cellars Old Vines Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of toasted oak. High-strung with bright acidity and a citrus-laden finish. Shy fruit and a slight vegetal tone on the finish. Disjointed.*

2006 Brogan Cellars Michaela's Reserve Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$110. The last Brogan Cellars Pinot Noir from Summa Vineyard. Crafted from young vines. Named for Margi's granddaughter born in 2006. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of black cherry liquor and vanillin oak. Layered and flashy on the palate with delicious flavors of well-spiced redder fruits which cling to the lengthy finish. Beautifully balanced with a dreamy mouth feel. A special wine with years of life ahead.*



2002 Littorai Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$65. Sampled a week after the tasting (the wine was misplaced in my cellar and I found it after the tasting). *Nicely perfumed with aromas of exotic dark berries, old book, pipe smoke, oak and dried rose petals. Very intensely flavored with waves of wild red berries, caressed by notable but balanced tannins, finishing strong and long with a hint of smoky, herbal oak and a touch of heat. Still fresh and alive and will last several more years. Very good.*

2003 Littorai Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 85 cases, \$65. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very fragrant with scents of dark berries and cherries, spice, and conifer. Delicious core of dark red raspberries and blueberries with a hint of baking spice and herbs. Soft tannins and velvety on the palate. Outstanding, showing the balance to last another 10 years.*



2005 Littorai Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 24 cases, \$80. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Similar to the 2003 vintage but with more intense fruit aromas augmented by hints of wooded forest and savory herbs including sage. Discreetly concentrated core of vivid dark red berries wrapped in soft tannins. Very seductive with a satiny smooth mouth feel. Many years ahead.*

2006 Littorai Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 121 cases, \$80. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Exotic and nuanced aromas including cherries, earth, flowers and stainless steel. Middleweight flavors of savory deep red berries caressed by ripe, dry tannins and lifted by a good cut of acidity. Holding nicely.*

2008 Littorai Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$80. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Flavorful fruit core of black cherries, black raspberries, but suffers from a subtle smoke, tar and creosote flavor. Well-crafted as always by Ted Lemon, but smoke taint ruins the experience for me.*

1999 Mueller Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. *Dark reddish-purple color with rim bricking and sediment in the glass. Aromas of leather, tea and leaf. Moderately rich flavors of blackberries, black tea and cola with imposing tannins which overwhelm the fading fruit. Past its prime.*

1995 Williams Selyem Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 52 cases, \$125. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass with no rim bricking. Unbelievably fresh and alive with impressive aromatic and flavor power. Scents of brandied cherries, tea leaf, and saffras. Elegant and smooth on the palate, offering delicious flavors of cherries, baking spices, rose hips tea and subtle oak which persist on the bright finish. Didn't even consider spitting this one out. A rare glimpse of the convergence of a remarkable vineyard and the genius of a legendary winemaker.*

Shortly before the tasting, Margi (Brogan Cellars) notified me of her inability to attend due to family commitments. At the last minute, I contacted my friend, Kerith Overstreet, M.D., who has been crafting Pinot Noir and Zinfandel under the Bruliam label for a few years, and she was able to fill in. A relatively new and humble winemaker who recently moved to Healdsburg, she wrote a very humorous piece about her experience at the tasting on her blog titled "The Luckiest Girl in the World." I have reproduced her blog entry here.

[The Luckiest Girl in the World](#)

Posted: 17 Jun 2012 10:14 AM PDT

If you live in Los Angeles, you'll eventually come across a celebrity. You may find yourself cross legged beside Gisele Bundchen during Mommy & Me class at the kinder gym. Perhaps you've indulged in a manicure alongside Jessica Simpson or sidled past Pam Anderson at the plastic surgeon's office. It's a law of averages. Here in Sonoma County the currency is less reality TV diva and more celebrity vintner. (Notwithstanding a purported Giada de Laurentiis sighting at the last summer Farmer's Market; apparently I missed her phone message.) I have heard winemaker Merry Edwards is a devoted yogi, but I'm too lazy to drive to the studio in her neighborhood. I doubt either the Kosta or Browne contingency buys wine at Costco. But, it's bound to happen here too- that elusive celebrity winemaker sighting. It may even emerge from the most mundane and inauspicious of circumstances, like an 11th hour Hail Mary phone call.

I fielded a call last Wednesday at 8:58 am, as I was rushing to drop the kids at summer camp. It was a good friend and well known wine reviewer asking if I wanted to join him at a high end pinot noir tasting starting at 10 am. Some last minute cancellation relinquished a vacancy at the tasting table. Might I enjoy a morning of fine wine? High end, single vineyard pinot at 10 am? Hell yeah, count me in. I asked if I should bring wine or something to share. He said to just show up. So I did, about 15 minutes late (I had to stop at the post office). Then my head exploded.

It turns out I had Forrest Gumped into a private tasting of verticals from Summa Vineyard, a legendary Sonoma Coast property way out in West County. The tasting featured five different wineries each using pinot noir fruit from the same 6 acre site, with wines dating back to 1995. I arrived, fashionable late and took the only open seat behind a forlorn, phalanx of empty stemware. The phase one tasting included 7 wines from the same producer, spanning 2002-2010. Eleven additional Summa Vineyard wines rounded out phase two. I am not one to name drop, but this was a serious who's who of Sonoma Coast pinot noir. Imagine an Academy Awards of Superstar Celebrity Vintners kind of event. I was totally star struck. I used every ounce of professional restraint to keep my camera phone stashed in my purse.

To my right was a lovely older gentleman in a Hawaiian shirt. He smiled, stuck out his hand, and said, "I'm Burt. Good to meet you." I looked at him and said, "I know exactly who you are, sir." The company was as awe inspiring as the wines. You cannot pay any amount of money to taste such rare stuff side by side. I'd stumbled into a carefully curated private tasting. I was a lucky interloper. One winemaking celebrity mistook me for a sales rep for another winery. At least he didn't ask me to serve him some crackers.

Now for the wines. Allow me to preface this by reminding you that I am not an amateur wine reviewer. I'm worse. I pride myself on my failure to identify a Rioja from left-bank Bordeaux blind. But, I will share my notes from my three favorites, in descending order of jaw-dropping awesomeness.

#3) 2007 Rivers-Marie Summa Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

"Color is more red and less brick than '02/'03, nose with integrated baking spice, allspice, clove, exotic spice, cherry, raspberry, blood orange, tastes of fruit and spice, still quite bright with nice acid."

#2) 2006 Brogan Michaela's Reserve Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

"Love it! Sexy and seductive nose with floral notes, red cherry, cherry candy and some oak flavors on the finish; nice spice on a long finish. This wine is plush and giving."

Now to blow your mind, no friggin' joke:

#1) 1995 Williams-Selyem Winery Sonoma Coast Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir

"Holy crap! Color is still red; no brown tinge. Nose is plummy and perfumed, cherry, tea, fresh sage, and thyme. Wow! Still has crazy structure and tannin. Vibrant."

Like I said, I don't like to drop names, but Burt Williams borrowed my pen.

Russian River Valley Immersion Trip for the ¡Salud! Oregon Wine Auction

¡Salud! is uniquely Oregon and represents a collaboration between Oregon winemakers and healthcare professionals to provide access to health care for Oregon's seasonal vineyard and winery workers and their families. A dedicated group of vintners and Tuality Healthcare physicians created ¡Salud!, named for the traditional Spanish toast, "To your health!" As a retired physician, this charity is close to my heart.



Each year, the two day ¡Salud! Oregon Wine Auction is held in the Willamette Valley and Portland, Oregon, in November. For the past three years, I have donated a Russian River Valley Immersion Trip for two couples, where I host the auction winners for four days for special winery visits and tastings, meals, and lodging. This year's winners were Russ and Carol Paine (left in photo below) who were accompanied by their friends, Mike and Mary Hoag.



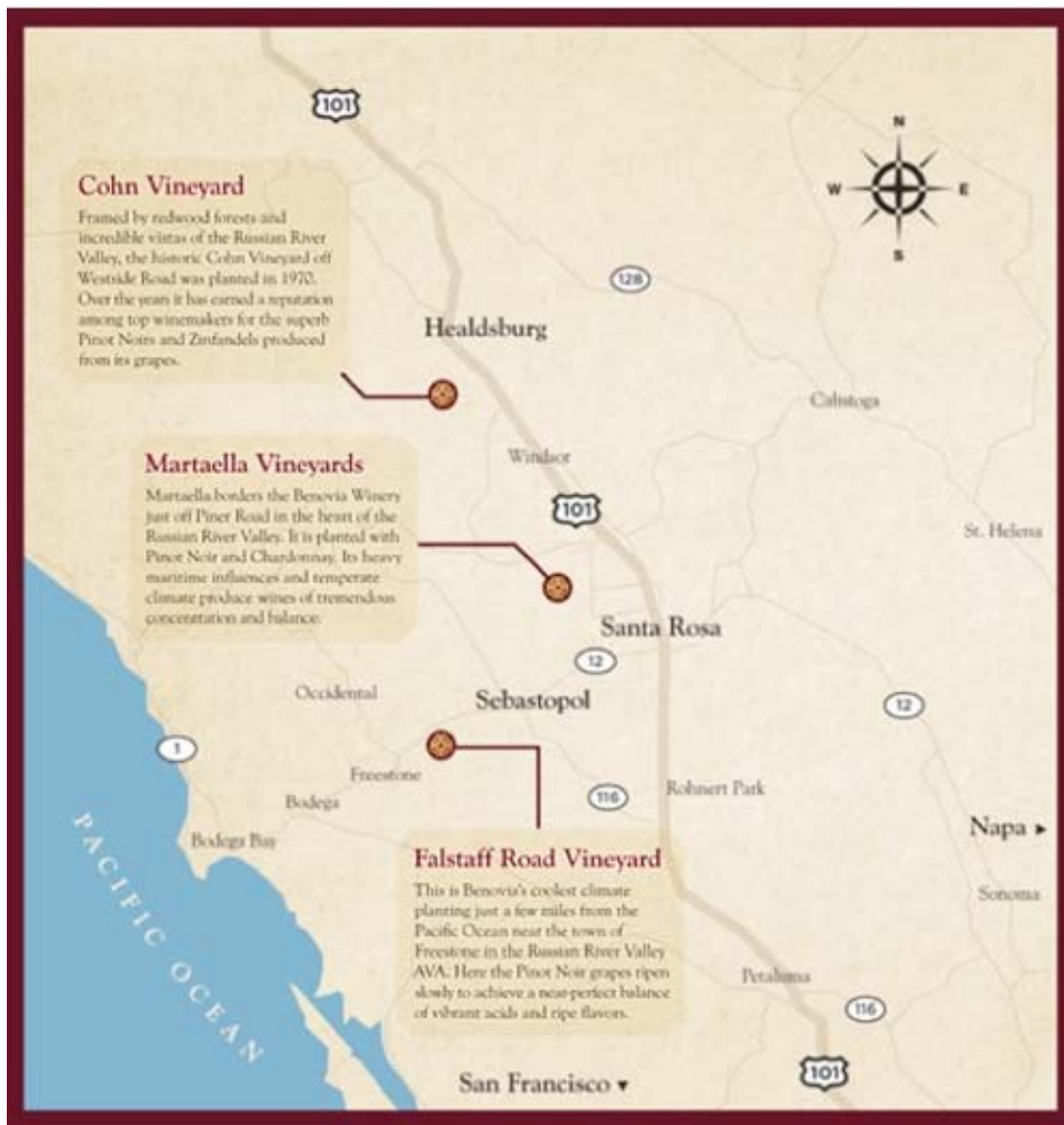
I want to give a shout out to the wineries that were so instrumental in the success of this trip, held May 29 to June 1, 2012. All the wineries involved are very successful, and most of them sell out their wines annually to eager wine enthusiasts, but they generously gave of their time and resources to support this charity. The charity does not benefit them directly, but the wineries participate as a goodwill nod to others in the wine industry.

Benovia Winery, Santa Rosa, California

Benovia Winery donated their vineyard hideaway three-bedroom cottage, situated adjacent the 41-acre estate Martaella Vineyard, as lodging for the auction winners. Partner and winemaker, Michael Sullivan (the big guy with the hat), hosted a tour of the winery's vineyards and an extensive tasting of Benovia wines.



Benovia Winery produces Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Zinfandel from both estate vineyards and premium fruit sources. The estate vineyards include Martaella, located in the Laguna de Santa Rosa region of the Russian River Valley AVA adjacent the winery, planted primarily to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay under the expertise of "Dr. Dirt," Daniel Roberts, PhD, Cohn, located in the western reaches of the Russian River Valley, just outside the AVA and planted to Pinot Noir and Zinfandel, and Falstaff Road, 12 acres of Pinot Noir located in the Sonoma Coast near the town of Freestone.



Annual production is 4,000 cases at Benovia at an estate winery with a 10,000 case capacity.

My tasting notes of the 2010 vintage (all wines recently bottled and several scheduled for fall release):

Michael has backed off the percentage of new oak to 30-35% which has resulted in noticeably softer textures. The wines are not as rich as the 2008 and 2009 vintage wines, possessing more femininity and charm. I believe these are the finest Benovia wines to date.

2010 Benovia Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 70 cases from 3 Sisters Vineyard owned by the Martinelli Family, which previously supplied fruit to Marcassin. Whole cluster pressed and fermented with indigenous yeast. 100% MLF. Aged 16 months in 30% new French oak. *Aromas of fresh green apple, citrus and pear. The flavors echo the nose. Bright and crisp with nicely integrated oak. Very good.*

2010 Benovia La Pommeraiie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 250 cases. From the Zio Tony Vineyard owned and farmed by George Martinelli, planted to high-density Dijon clones. Aged in 40% new French oak. Vineyard was once an apple orchard. *Tropical, exotic fruit aromas. Delicious flavors of pineapple,*

white peach and citrus, persisting on the long finish. Commendable acid spine that is nicely folded in to the entire fruit mix. Very good (+).

2010 Benovia Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.61, \$38. From selected blocks from estate vineyards and fruit from a few premium growers. Calera, Swan, Pommard, and Martini heirloom clones plus Dijon 115, 6667, 777 and 828. 5% whole cluster. Aged 17 months in 40% new French oak. *Nicely perfumed with spicy Bing cherries, dark red berries and rose petals. Relatively light in weight featuring redder fruits including cranberry, accented by a note of tar and cola, displaying mild tannins and a dry finish. Good.*

2010 Benovia Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.63, \$45. Predominantly Mataella Estate Vineyards fruit. Dijon, heirloom and Pommard clones. *Aromas of red berries and berries. Bigger and riper than the Sonoma Coast bottling with moderately full flavors of cherries and cola, finishing with admirable length. Very good.*

2010 Benovia Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir From organically farmed, 18-year-old vines including Martini, Pommard, Calera and Dijon 114 clones. *Delicate aromas of rose petals, dark berries and cocoa. The fruit really pops on the palate with a welcoming stylistic finesse. Happiness in a glass. Very good (+).*



2010 Benovia Bella Una Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Primarily Pommard clone from Martaella Estate Vineyard. More whole cluster. *Darker in color. Very aromatic, even stunning in intensity of dark fruits. Smooth and sexy on the palate with a well-mannered load of dark berry and plum fruit flavors, backed by restrained fine-grain tannins. An exceptional offering. Very good (+).*

2010 Benovia Cohn Vineyard Sonoma County Pinot Noir 40-year-old vines from a 6.5-acre vineyard offering very low yields. A monopole for Benovia. Volcanic soils. *Aromas of wild berries, cassis and sauvage. Soft and smooth on the palate with generous raspberry and blackberry flavor, supported by ripe, soft tannins and lively acidity. The wine has a mineral-laden and animale quality that makes it quite unique. Another exceptional wine from this vintage. Very good (+).*

2010 Benovia La Pommerai Russian River Valley Pinot Noir From the dry-farmed Zio Tony Vineyard including clones 828 and 777. Tends to be a big wine. *Demure aromas of dark berries and exotic spices. Luxurious and soft on the palate, with generous and bold flavors of perfectly ripe blackberries, wrapped in firm tannins. Very young and unevolved. Very good.*

Benovia Winery offers tasting by appointment (707-526-441). The wines are also offered on the website at www.benoviawinery.com. The winery's Vineyard Hideaway Cottage is available for rent.

Thomas George Estates, Healdsburg, California

The Baker Family has done a remarkable job in upgrading the former Davis Bynum Winery and estate vineyards. Winemaker Chris Rossi has brought the lineup of wines to a lofty level shared by more veteran Healdsburg wineries such as Williams Selyem and Rochioli. The winery has four cottages on the estate for

rent, and offered one for me to stay while hosting the Russian River Valley Immersion. They say fog makes the Pinot Noir in the Russian River Valley and one can see the striking difference between the upper photo taken on a sunny afternoon, and the next day in the early, foggy morning.



We had a gourmet al fresco dinner in the park-like setting adjacent the tasting room at Thomas George Estates. The meal was catered by Chef Krista of Boon Eat + Drink in Guerneville and served alongside Thomas George Estates wines. The menu:

Liberty Farms duck rilette over crispy polenta squares with cherry-habanero glaze
Organic beef tartar over goat cheese crostini, mint, hazelnut dust

**2010 Thomas George Estates Amber Block, Starr Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley
Sparkling Pinot Noir**

Pan seared scallops over corn puree, brown butter, mushroom-corn confetti

2009 Thomas George Estates Brian & Janice Schmidt Vineyard Dry Creek Valley Viognier



Chili braised Niman pork shoulder over creamy polenta, sauteed rainbow chard with chili and lemon, finished with ricotta salata

2009 Thomas George Estates Baker Ridge Backbone Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

Vanilla bean panna cotta, blueberry-thyme compote, lavender shortbread cookies

I tasted some of the unreleased 2010 Thomas George Estates Pinot Noirs in the winery's cave with winemaker Chris Rossi and manager Sean Tevik. The Pinots were vinified with more whole cluster in 2010, up to 37% in some lots, employing native yeasts fermentations and aging in 40% or less new French oak.

2009 Thomas George Estates Starr Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 405 cases, \$60. The warmest of the three estate vineyards located in the Middle Reach of the Russian River Valley. *Forward and drinking beautifully now with plenty of pleasing black cherry, rhubarb and dark strawberry fruit underlain with spice. Elegant with lively acidity. Very good.*

2010 Thomas George Estates Starr Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 352 cases. Clones 114, 777, 115 and Pommard. *Enticing aromas of plum, black cherry, spice and stem. The fruit flavors echo the nose with added accents of dark chocolate, cola and fennel. Good.*

2010 Thomas George Estates Baker Ridge Dexter's Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 24-year-old vines. Clones 2A, Martini, Swan, Pommard and Dijon. *Very fragrant with hi-tone aromas of sous-bois and spice. Delicious core of black cherry and spiced plum fruit finishing with flourish and a good cut of acidity. Soft as a baby's bottom in the mouth. Crazy good. Very good (+).*

2010 Thomas George Estates Baker Ridge Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 240 cases. Multiple clones, newer plantings. *Ripe strawberry aromas with spice. Very soft and richly fruited with flavors of dark red and black berries, black cherries, black grapes and cola. Well-crafted with nicely managed firm tannins and acidity. Very good.*

2009 Thomas George Estates Baker Ridge Backbone Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 64 cases, \$60. Martini clone. *A composty, savory wine with plenty of dark fruit aromas and flavors including currants and raisins. Very good.*

2010 Thomas George Estates Baker Ridge Backbone Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir *Very fragrant showing hi-tone scents of dark plums and spice. Relatively soft in the mouth with a savory herb theme evident. Undeveloped, with acid to the forefront. Reserve judgment at this early stage.*

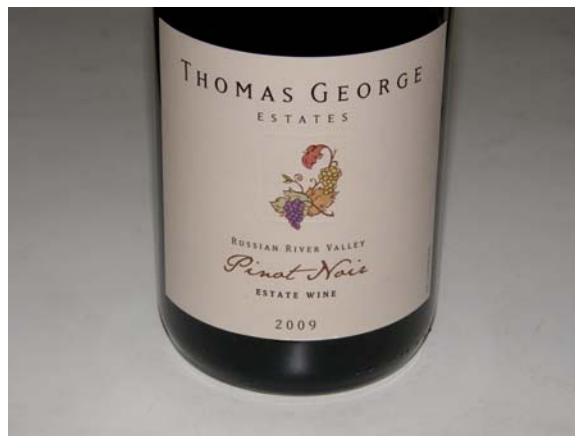


View of Russian River Valley from Baker Ridge Vineyard

2009 Thomas George Estates Cresta Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 401 cases, \$60. This estate vineyard is located in Green Valley. *Opens slowly in the glass, revealing a luxurious perfume of blackberries and blueberries. Richly fruited with layers of black and blue fruits, backed by firm tannins. An intense, age worthy wine. Very good.*

2010 Thomas George Estates Cresta Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir *The nose features dark fruits, compost and floral notes. Opens slowly in the glass, revealing middleweight flavors of fresh black cherries, dark berries, dark plum with a savory bent. The most tannin now in the lineup and will benefit from further aging. Offers impressive finishing length. Very good.*

2010 Thomas George Estates Estate Blend Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 40% Cresta Ridge Vineyard, less Baker Ridge Vineyard. *Dark in color, with effusive aromas of Bing cherries, cola, oak spice and baking spice. Solid core of fresh cherry fruit, moderately rich in energy, with balanced tannins and noticeable oak. Flavors of rhubarb and red raspberry add interest. Still young but very promising. Good.*



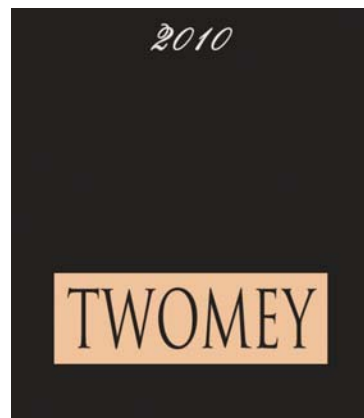
Thomas George Estates' tasting room is open daily at 8075 Westside Road. The wines are sold on the website at www.thomasgeorgeestates.com. This is a special winery to visit with a very welcoming tasting room, a park perfect for picnicking, and the only caves on Westside Road.

Twomey Cellars, Healdsburg, California

Our gracious hosts for a tour, barrel tasting, bottle tasting and luncheon were owner Raymond Twomey Duncan (foreground with hat below) and winemaker Ben Cane (in background below). This winery has made remarkable strides since Cane came on board in 2008 to work with senior winemaker Daniel Baron. The emphasis here is on appellation wines from the Anderson Valley, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast and a vineyard-designate from Bien Nacido Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley. The 2010 Twomey Anderson Valley Pinot Noir and 2010 Twomey Russian River Pinot Noir were reviewed and highly lauded in the last issue of the *PinotFile* (www.princeofpinot.com/winery/69/). The 2010 Twomey Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir and 2010 Twomey Bien Nacido Pinot Noir have not been released, but were tasted at a luncheon at the winery and both were stellar. The Bien Nacido bottling in particular excited me. An excellent Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc rounds out the lineup.



The Twomey Pinot Noirs have a style that emphasizes food friendliness. They are moderately extracted with bright acidity and silky textures. The wines have a quality that Raymond Duncan likes to call “Yummy.” I am a big fan of the wines.



The Twomey Cellars tasting room has a very informed and friendly staff and the tasting room views across the Russian River are more spectacular than at any other winery on Westside Road. The wines are sold on the website at www.twomeycellars.com.

Kosta Browne Winery, Sebastopol, California

Winemaker Michael Browne (far right in photo below) and Public Relations Director Toni Lombardi were our hosts for a barrel tasting of 2011 Pinot Noirs and a bottle tasting of 2010 releases. The superb lineup of 2010 Kosta Browne releases are reviewed later in this issue.



Kosta Browne is building a 40,000-square-foot modern winery as part of the new Barlow complex in downtown Sebastopol, with a grand opening slated for fall 2012. The Barlow was the former site of an apple processing plant and warehouses. The new Barlow complex is modeled after the Ferry Building Marketplace in San Francisco and will include artisan food and beverage purveyors such as Woodfour Brewing Co., Bliss Bakery, Village Bakery, Mama Tina's Ravioli, Taylor Maid Coffee, Guayaki Tea, and Rosso Pizzeria. Several boutique stores, such as Lynn's Lavender and The Uncarved Block will be included as well as the Sebastopol Center for the Arts, bocce ball courts and space for the Sebastopol Farmer's Market. Tasting rooms will be open for La Follette Wines, Marimar Estate Vineyards & Winery, and Wind Gap Winery.

Kosta Browne now produces about 14,000 case of wine annually, but is increasing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir production over the next five years. Projected future Chardonnay production is 1,800 cases, up from 500 cases in 2010. The new Kosta Browne winery will not have a tasting room open to the public, but will welcome occasional mailing list guests, and will work closely with the other food producers and artisans in The Barlow.

Kosta Browne wines are sold through an allocated mailing list (which currently has a waiting list for new joiners). For information, visit www.kostabrowne.com.



DuMOL Wines, Windsor, California

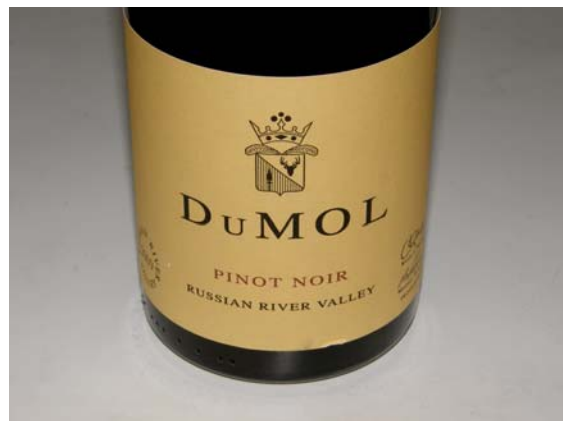
Winemaker and co-proprietor, Andy Smith (pictured second from right), hosted our group for a barrel tasting (2011 Chardonnay and Pinot Noir), and 2010 bottled wines. Andy has been the winemaker and viticulturist at DuMOL since 2000 and he crafts a remarkably consistent lineup of the highest quality premium wines including Pinot Noir, Syrah, Chardonnay and Viognier. His training under Neil McCallum at Dry River (Martinborough, New Zealand), Ted Lemon at Littorai, and Paul Hobbs has served him well. Most of the DuMOL wines are sourced from the cool Green Valley appellation where DuMOL also has an estate vineyard.



I will be reviewing the 2010 DuMOL releases in an upcoming issue. The 2011 wines we sampled from barrel were remarkable and bode well for this vintage. The Pinots are delicate and elegant, full of nuance. What stood out in my mind was tasting a barrel sample of a 2011 Pinot Noir made from a new Dijon clone, 943.

I recall John Kelley, the cerebral winemaker for Westwood Winery in Sonoma, wrote in his blog that clone 943 came out at the top of the periodic tastings conducted by Dr. Bernard at the Lycée Viticole in Dijon every year. Clusters are smaller than clones 115 or 777, but more numerous. The berries are very small with less than average seed count. Reportedly, wines made from 943 have ethereal aromatics and low tannins. Clone 943 is now licensed by ENTAV to a limited number of nurseries in the United States.

DuMOL wines are sold through an allocated mailing list. The winery, located in Windsor, is not open to the public. Visit www.dumol.com to join the list and for more information.



Arista Winery, Healdsburg, California

Our host was proprietor Mark McWilliams, who gave us a tour of the property and treated us to a tasting and luncheon in their new cozy event facility. Arista has hired a full-time talented chef, William Oliver, and now offers visitors sit down tastings with appropriate wine and food pairings.

Founded in 2002 by the McWilliams Family, the estate is located on 36 acres along Westside Road next door to Williams Selyem Winery. Winemaker Leslie Sisneros crafts several Pinot Noirs from widely disparate regions including the Willamette Valley of Oregon, Mendocino Ridge, Anderson Valley, Sonoma Coast, Russian River Valley, and Santa Cruz Mountains, as well as estate vineyards which have just come into significant production with the 2010 vintage. The Pinot Noirs are polished, balanced, and enticing when young, but many of them possess long term age ability.



We tasted the **2010 Arista Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**, **2010 Arista Harper's Rest Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir**, **2010 Two Birds Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**, and **2010 Arista Perli Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir**. The wines are still young but offer exciting potential. I will be reviewing the wines when they are released this year. Our luncheon consisted of three courses and three Arista wines.

Dayboat scallop, wild grain salad, little gem lettuce, chevre, filberts

2011 Arista Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Gewürztraminer

Braised wild boar, infant vegetables, spiced parsnip puree, demi glace

2010 Arista Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir



Summer berry cobbler, sugar cookie crumble, vanilla whipped cream, strawberry

2010 Arista Smokey Ridge Vineyard Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel

Arista's tasting room is surrounded by a serene Japanese garden. Located at 7015 Westside Road, Arista is open for tasting daily from 11-5. The wines are only offered through the tasting room and the website. The more limited production wines are only available to wine club and mailing list members. Visit www.aristawinery.com. (Mark McWilliams is center in photo below)



Williams Selyem Winery, Healdsburg, California

Hospitality Manager Michael Traverso was our gracious host for a tour and tasting at the new Williams Selyem Winery on Westside Road. Winemaker Bob Cabral and a supporting cast produce Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Zinfandel, and occasionally other varietals that continue to gather praise from the wine press and gang of wine aficionados. About 40% of the wines are now produced from estate vineyards while 60% are sourced.

2010 Williams Selyem Limestone Ridge at Vista Verde Vineyard San Benito County Chenin Blanc

12.8% alc., \$25. Winery exclusive. Cold fermented in concrete egg-shaped fermenters imported from France. Fermented dry with no malo-lactic to capture the influence of the limestone soil in this block of the vineyard. *Aromas of petrichor and grapefruit lead to flavors of melon, pear and green tea. Refreshing zip of acidity on the clean finish. Very good.*

2006 Williams Selyem Precious Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$94.

Winery exclusive from library. Yields of 1 ton per acre max. *Austere aromas of dried herbs, spice, and red berries. Middleweight flavors of dark red fruits including cranberries with a nice accent of spice, framed by firm dry tannins and bright acidity. Very good.*

2008 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$49. Winery visitor exclusive. *Moderately concentrated flavors of dark cherries and exotic berries, with notes of toasted oak. Smoothly textured with an extended finish marked by a creosote aroma. Very slight smoke taint evident in this wine. Good.*

2010 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$49. Winery visitor exclusive. Previously reviewed favorably in the *PinotFile*.

2008 Williams Selyem Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$49. Winery visitor exclusive. Primarily from Drake Estate Vineyard (Pommard and clone 115) planted in 1998 with some contribution from vineyards along Westside Road. *Enticing aromas of candied cherries and mocha. Discreetly concentrated flavors of black cherries, cola and oak spice wrapped in soft, fine-grain tannins. Crisp and easy to like. Good (+).*

2006 Williams Selyem Hawk Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$50. Winery visitor exclusive. *Full-on, 100% malo style Chardonnay. Very creamy on the palate with luscious flavors of pineapple upside down cake, lemon and white peach. Some minerality adds crispness. Holding nicely. Very good.*

Some glimpses of Williams Selyem: From top to bottom, front of winery, on the winery deck with Michael, the estate vineyard, milk tank used for fermentations.





Williams Selyem wines are sold exclusively through a mailing list. There is reportedly a waiting list to join, but small amounts of wine are made available to those who call the winery and purchase. Once you buy at least one bottle, you become a friend of the winery and stay on the mailing list. You are then entitled to visit the winery by appointment, stage a patio party, receive tours of the property, picnic, and have access to some of the small production wines only available at the winery. Visit www.williamsselyem.com.



J Vineyards & Winery, Healdsburg, California

Our Russian River Valley Immersion journey ended in fine style, with a sit down food and wine pairing in The Bubble Room at J Winery. J has embarked on a new era with the departure of veteran winemaker George Bursick, who brought the winery's still wine program into prominence, and the arrival of winemaker Melissa Stackhouse, who previously was the winemaker at La Crema and Pinot Noir Winemaster for all Jackson Family Wines. Her first complete vintage at J will be 2010.

The two Pinot Noirs sampled at this pairing have been very favorably reviewed previously in the *PinotFile* (www.princeofpinot.com/winery/164/). An outstanding 2009 J Nicole's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is also currently available. The executive chef is Mark E. Caldwell.

2010 J Vineyards "STRATA" Russian River Valley Chardonnay

Chilled zucchini soup, white truffle oil, croutons

2011 J Vineyards Hoot Owl Vineyard Alexander Valley Viognier

Pan-seared day boat scallop, English pea puree, salsa verde

2009 J Vineyards "Barrel 16" Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

Pork Milanese, roasted asparagus, royal trumpet mushrooms, Dijon sauce

2009 J Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

Slow-roasted spring lamb medallion, Yukon Gold potato fondant, green garlic soubise
dried Bing cherry compote

J Brut Rosé Russian River Valley

Rhubarb pavlova, rosé-raspberry gélee, almond crunch

2003 J Vintage Brut, Late Disgorged, Russian River Valley

Mignardises
ricciarelli, croccante, amaretti, strawberry marscapone



J Vineyards & Winery offers a beautiful and sophisticated tasting experience both indoors and outdoors at the winery located at 11447 Old Redwood Highway in Healdsburg. A number of different tasting experiences are offered, some requiring an appointment. A number of Club J tiers and benefits are offered to wine club members. Visit www.jwine.com.

No trip to the Russian River Valley would be complete without a departing visit to my favorite bakery in Freestone (Wild Flour Bread) for a biscotti fix, and my favorite stop on the long drive home to Southern California.



Tasting Pinot with Plenty of Noir

"Come over to the dark side. Together we can rule the universe."
Darth Vader

Alice Feiring, who writes for the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications, recently posted an article in *Newsweek Magazine* that was reported on the internet (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/06/10/big-jammy-not-anymore-california-s-wine-takes-new-direction.html>). The title of the article was "Big? Jammy? Not Anymore!" Despite her claims (and others) that there is a significant movement away from the "California" style of Pinot Noir of moderately high to high alcohols and power toward a style of Pinot Noir that emphasizes restraint and nuance, my recent tastings found that the "California" style is very much alive.

The average alcohol percentage of the 2010 vintage California Pinot Noirs reviewed in this section was 14.5% with a range of 13.9% (two wines below 14.0%) to 15.7%. Many of these wines are incredibly appealing for their hedonistic fruit flavors. There are a significant group of wine consumers who cherish these wines and give no quarter to the alcohol percentage or heft of the wines. Let me give you an example. I taste Pinot Noir most days of the week. Obviously I have plenty of left over wine. I gas the wines with argon after I am finished tasting and distribute them to wine lovers in my neighborhood. I then seek comments about the wines whenever possible. I often find that the wines that are most favored are those that have rich, bold flavors and accompanying moderately high alcohols. The American palate has always preferred some sweetness in their wines; the type of sweetness offered by mature fruit flavors as they merge with sweet oak components. These are not always wines that I have rated highly but I can appreciate them in the style they are crafted.

The point here is that there are plenty of stylistic choices for the consumer interested in Pinot Noir. No wine critic can be an arbitrator of personal taste. There is always room for differences in wine. It's not the label, not the alcohol, and not the style. If you like it, then it is a good wine.

Arista Winery

Profiled previously in this issue, Arista produces both appellation series and single-vineyard and estate wines. The wines profiled below are part of the spring release lineup and are available through national distribution and the winery's mailing list at www.aristawinery.com.

2010 Arista Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.55, 289 cases, \$45. Grapes from Arista's estate vineyards and fruit sourced from the Toboni and Mononi vineyards. Aged in 14% new, 21% 1-year, and 64% 2-3-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderate dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of Bing cherries, raspberries and baking spices. Discreetly concentrated flavors of cherries, cranberries and red plums with a touch of oak and cola. Nicely composed and very approachable now. Good.*



2010 Arista Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.67, TA 0.57, 850 cases, \$35. Aged in 5% new, 17% 1-year, and 78% 2-3-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Beguiling and uplifting nose offering scents of cherry pie glaze, vanilla and spice. Hearty core of black cherry fruit with an earthy, charred, grilled fruit riff. Medium weighted with a firm, well-proportioned tannic backbone, and lasting flavors on the somewhat gregarious finish. Good.*

2010 Arista Longbow Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.55, \$48. Aged in 46% new, 23% 1-year, and 31% 2-3-year-old French oak barrels. This bottling is chosen from Arista's most distinct Russian River Valley lots and it shows it. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Love the nose. Hi-tone aromas of darker stone and berry fruits, brimming with freshness. Delicious essence of black cherries with a hint of saffras, dark chocolate and cola, offering impressive mid palate intensity and finishing power, yet easy to drink. Needs another few years to fully integrate the oak and tannins. The best Longbow bottling I can remember and recommended. Very good (+).*





2011 Arista Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley

Gewürztraminer 14.1% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.58, 225 cases, \$28.

I don't usually review this variety, but Arista's version is a winner and I would like to spread the love. One of the best Alsatian-styled Gewürztraminer wines among the very few offered from California. The Ferrington Vineyard is owned by Kurt and Heather

Schoeneman who purchased the vineyard in 1997. It is planted to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Gewürztraminer, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc, rooted in decomposed sandstone and clay soils. This wine is 85% tank fermented and 15% barrel fermented. *Pale gold color and clear in the glass. Very fragrant with typical aromas of tropical fruits, lychee and spice. Delicious flavors of mango, crabapple, lychee and pear with a sense of minerality in the background. Slightly viscous, lively and bone dry.*



Try the Arista Gewürztraminer with the following delicious recipe from Arista's Executive Chef William Oliver.



ARISTA
WINERY

Prawn Spring Rolls with Coconut Dipping Sauce

pair with 2011 Ferrington Vineyard Gewurztraminer

Spring Roll Ingredients:

- 1 package of round rice paper
- 1 cup of fine julienne vegetables: daikon radish, red bell pepper, carrot, cucumber
- ¼ cup plus 1 tsp. chopped coriander
- 1 lb of u-12 prawns (poached in shell, peeled, cleaned, split lengthwise)

Dipping Sauce Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp minced ginger
- 1 tsp. minced shallot
- ½ cup of unseasoned rice wine vinegar
- ¼ cup mirin
- ½ cup fresh coconut milk
- ½ of a red chili, finely diced or 1 tsp. of chili paste
- 1 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tsp. miso paste

Preparation:

Bring 3 cups of water to 145 degrees in sauce pot. Dip paper by hand into water for 10 seconds or until it becomes delicate. Quickly lay out on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Add julienned vegetables (blanch the carrot to keep color). Add small amount of coriander and 3 halves of prawns. Place on paper and roll up like you would an egg roll. Add remaining ingredients together for dipping sauce. Make sauce the night before for better results. Split rolls and half and serve as an appetizer or light lunch.

Executive Chef William Oliver

Belle Glos

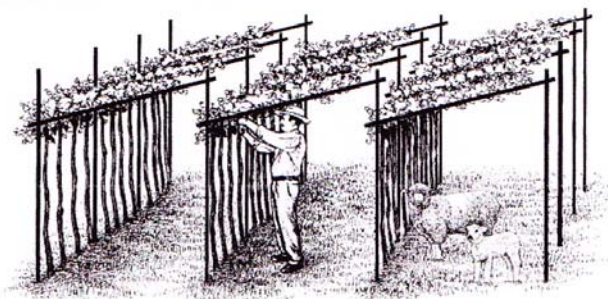
The Pinot Noirs from Belle Glos (“ BELL GLOS”) carry on the tradition of excellence of the Wagner Family of Wine. The wines are produced by winemaker and viticulturist Joseph Wagner, sourced from cool Region 1 single-vineyard sites. The name Belle Glos pays homage to Joseph Wagner’s 96-year-old grandmother, Lorna Belle Glos Wagner, who co-founded Caymus Vineyards with Joseph’s grandfather Charlie Wagner and father Chuck Wagner in 1972. Joseph divides his times between his home in St. Helena and the winery’s three vineyard sites. The 2010 wines benefited from a cool growing season throughout California, with record hang time on the vines. All three wines spent 9 months in 60% new French oak. I find the 2010 vintage wines significantly better than their 2009 counterparts.

The bottles are among the most charming in the wine business, offering a long neck dipped in generous wax. A strip tab allows removal of the wax on top exposing the cork (removal of the strip takes some muscle and should not be attempted at home by women with kept nails). The labels are also very classy.



The 2010 Belle Glos Pinot Noirs are very darkly colored and upon approaching the wines, the expectation is that these are full-bodied, bruiser wines. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The wines are very light on their feet with admirable finesse. All three wines are surprisingly similar given their disparate origins and clonal makeup. The wines are widely distributed in the retail marketplace.

2010 Belle Glos Taylor Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$44. Released March 2012. Located less than 6 miles from the Pacific Ocean on Taylor Lane, adjacent Summa Vineyard. 10 acres of Dijon clones 113, 114, 115 and 777 are paired with an adapted Italian trellis system creating a horizontal canopy, geared to bringing more dappled sunlight to the vines throughout the day. The vines are at an elevated height, allowing sheep to graze the vineyard for natural weed control. 2010 was cooler than normal and the vineyard was battered by early October storms, but the fruit hung in until harvest finished on October 25. Yields 2.38 tons per acre. 100% de-stemmed, inoculation of yeasts tailored to each lot, punchdown and punch-over techniques. *Dark purple color in the glass. Aromas of berry jam on brioche and spice draw you into the glass. Delicious flavors of black cap raspberries and black plums with an earthy, compost undertone. Moderately rich with restrained tannins and some length on the fruit-filled finish. Approachable now, but the least giving of the three 2010 wines at this time. Very good.*





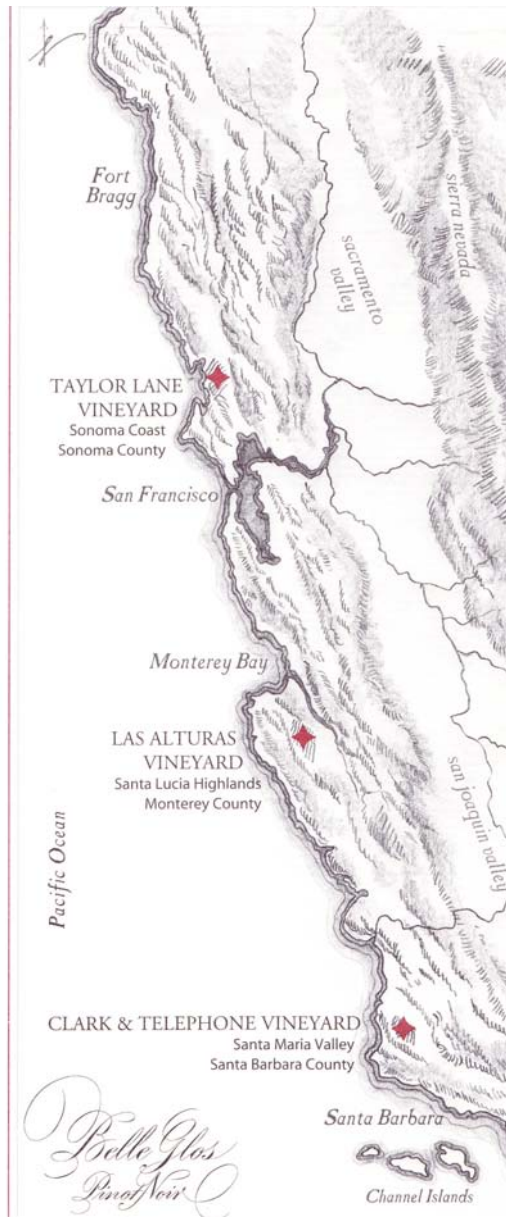
2010 Belle Glos Las Alturas Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$44.

Released December 2011. The vineyard is located in one of the highest plantable sites in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA (540 to 1200 feet). The southern locale is warmer by day and cooler by night with less wind than the northern portion of the AVA. Yields 1.76 tons per acre. 100% de-stemmed, cold soaked, punchdown and punch-over techniques. *Dark purple color in the glass. Scents of black fruits, tea and wine cave. Striking flavor of perfectly ripe black raspberries which coats the palate and expands in the mouth, finishing with a long, intense flourish and a bright cut of acidity. Subtle notes of spice and vanillin add interest. Seductively smooth with supple tannins. Powerful, but light on its feet. Not quite as big as the Clark & Telephone but equally satisfying.*



2010 Belle Glos Clark & Telephone Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$44. Released December 2011. Established in

1972, this vineyard is planted own rooted to the Martini clone. 100% de-stemmed, inoculation of yeasts to match each lot, punchdown and punch-over techniques. Yields 1.67 tons per acre. *Deep, dark purple robe in the glass. The nose is remarkably intense and persistent, pumping out aromas of dark berry jam, black currants, spice and vanillin over extended time in the glass. Flat-out stunning flavors of fresh black raspberries and blackberries with a complimentary exotic spice bent. Some refined tannins lead to a silky mouth feel. Astonishing length on the fruit-laden finish. I have rarely experienced a California Pinot Noir with such an incredibly long finish.*



Brophy Clark Cellars

This is my first meeting with the Pinot Noirs of Brophy Clark. Husband and wife team of John and Kelly Clark have been crafting small lots of Pinot Noir since 1996 from vineyards in Santa Barbara County. Between her time as a viticulturist and his as a winemaker, the two have more than fifty years of combined experience making Central Coast wines. Annual production is about 10,000 cases spread amongst Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and a few other varietals. The wines are solid and represent good value. Visit the website at www.brophyclarkcellars.com.



2009 Brophy Clark Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.61, TA 0.62, 300 cases, \$24. Sourced from the Garey Vineyard originally planted by Robert Mondavi Winery in 1998 (Dijon 115, 667 and Pommard clones), and the Goodchild Vineyard (clone 667). Aged 18 months in French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of dark cherries, brier and spice. Middleweight flavors of dark red cherries and berries with soft tannins and a tart cherry finish. Good (+).*

2009 Brophy Clark Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.61, 1,000 cases, \$16. Sourced from several vineyards (80% from Loma Verde Vineyard in Los Alamos). Clones 667, 115 and 777. Aged 16 months in oak. *Pleasant aromas of cherry pie, spice and subtle oak. Middleweight black cherry flavor with complimentary oak in the background. An easy drinker for every day use. Good.*



2010 Brophy Clark Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., \$29.99. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. This is a wine you can really get your teeth into. Vibrant aromas of cherry pie glaze and baking spice. Luscious cherry and berry flavors fan out nicely on the palate, persisting with aplomb on the generous finish that leaves a hint of warmth in its wake. Smooth and seductive, this is an evocative wine. Very good (+).*



Carr Vineyards & Winery

Carr is an urban winery located in downtown Santa Barbara first established in 1999 by Ryan and Jessica Carr. All wines are produced from Santa Barbara County grapes grown by Ryan, with a focus on Pinot Noir from the Sta. Rita Hills appellation. Carr's winery and tasting room is housed in a unique 1940s Quonset Hut and is open daily for wine tasting, wines by the glass, flights of wine and wine on tap. A very reliable source of premium Pinot Noir.



2009 Harvest Girl Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 354 cases, \$24. Released December 2011. A winery project between brothers Jonathan and Ryan Carr combining Jonathan's love for tattoo art and graphic design and Ryan's passion for winemaking. Label says, "She will live in your dreams forever and each year you will eagerly await her arrival." Aged 12 months in French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. A masculine wine that pushes ripeness to the edge. Aromas of cherries, porto, toast, fennel, nutmeg and seasoned oak. Richly endowed with pie-filling black fruits wrapped in firm fruit tannins. Not a subtle wine by any means, but easy to drink and one that will appeal to lovers of succulent dark fruit. Suitable for a big ribeye. Good*



Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery

Gary Farrell hasn't been here since 2006, but his namesake winery continues to put out consistently fine Chardonnay and Pinot Noir reminiscent of his style. Farrell personally chose Susan Reed as the winemaker upon his departure, but she left in early 2012 to be replaced by Theresa Heredia, formerly of Freestone Vineyards. The winery has access to premium vineyard sites including Rochioli Vineyard and Hallberg Vineyard. A stylish tasting room on Westside Road is open daily.

2009 Gary Farrell Westside Farms Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.2% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.68, 916 cases, \$38. Released May 1, 2011. Sourced from growers Ron and Pam Kaiser's 40-acre vineyard that sits on the banks of the Russian River, just four miles from the Gary Farrell winery. The Chardonnay vines are clone 4 planted in 1989. Whole-cluster pressed, racked to 100% French oak barrels (43% new, 47% 1-year-old, and 10% 2-year-old), aged sur lie for 7 months. 100% malolactic fermentation. *Light straw color in the glass. Aromas of warm baked apple, butter brickle, flint and marzipan. Moderately intense flavors of baked green apples, lemon curd, hazelnuts and buttered toast with slightly dry tannins and some length on the acid-driven finish. Very good.*

2009 Gary Farrell Hallberg Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc. pH 3.37, TA 0.60, 626 cases, \$55. Released September 1, 2011. This 100-acre vineyard is named for previous owners Don and Marcia Hallberg. Today it is farmed by partner and Sonoma-Cutrer alumnus Kirk Lokka. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of dark red and black fruits, spice, and wine cask, developing complexity over time in the glass. Tasty core of earth-kissed black plum and blackberry flavors with the fruit pulled into line with structured tannins and zippy citric acidity. A complimentary hint of oak brings up the rear. Drank nicely the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*



Gracianna

With the 2010 vintage, partners Trini and Ashley Amador are offering their fifth releases. The winery is named after the Amador family's great-great-grandmother, Gracianna Lasaga, who was known for hosting memorable celebrations. Trini was "caught" making wine in his garage when he was fifteen. His passion was evident, he was encouraged to make wine, and obtained a degree in enology and viticulture. As part of the Sonoma County community for decades, the Amadors are able to source premium fruit including Pinot Noir from the famed Bacigalupi Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. I have sampled a few vintages to date, and find the wines extremely appealing and recommended. I love to read the tech sheets on the Gracianna wines, as they reveal so much connection to family and a heartfelt pride for the family's wines. A tasting room will be opening soon on Westside Road, the "Rodeo Drive" of Pinot Noir.

2010 Gracianna Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 371 cases, \$48. Released April 2012. After a cold soak, the grapes were inoculated with proprietary yeast, racked into French oak barrels, and aged for 11 months. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely mix of fresh, vivid aromas of red cherries, red strawberries, savory herbs and sandalwood. Delicious essence of ripe red cherries and berries with a delightful earthy, savory bent. Well-composed with gossamer tannins and some length on the high-spirited, refreshing finish. Very good (+).*



Kosta Browne

I have written at length about this hugely popular winery founded by Dan Kosta and Michael Browne (see latest article at www.princeofpinot.com/article/1111/). The winery's new winemaking facility was detailed earlier in this issue. I tasted the 2010 Kosta Browne releases on July 4 this year, an appropriate time since these wines always set off fireworks in the mouth. Do not dismiss the appellation wines, for blending is Michael's strong suit, and these wines are consistently outstanding and made in enough quantity to be more widely available. The Santa Lucia Highlands appellation blend is new with the 2010 vintage. The vineyard designates offer more complexity and finishing length. The key to Kosta Browne's success, besides Michael's adept winemaking, is the impeccable fruit sources. The resulting wines are intense but not too intense, ripe but not overripe or underripe. The bad news is that the winery's mailing list was filled long ago, but the good news is that production is slowly increasing, making it worthwhile to join the mailing list for possible future offerings. The appellation wines were released in May 2012 and the vineyard-designates will be released in October 2012.

2010 Kosta Browne Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., 4,742 cases, \$58. *Moderately deep rose color in the glass. Richly perfumed with notes of black cherry bombast, cola and spice. Generously flavored, with intense dark cherries, cola and the slightest oak. Despite its heft, the wine drinks easily and smoothly in part due to supple tannins and balance. Very Russian River Valley in character flaunting the plush cherry fruit the region is known for. Very good.*

2010 Kosta Browne Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 768 cases, \$58. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Uplifting aromas of dark red raspberries and cassis. Impressive mid palate attack of dark red and black raspberry flavors with complimentary oak in the background. Relatively light in weight for a Kosta Browne wine, but picks up flavor intensity over time in the glass, and taking on an appealing heft the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A refreshing riff of acidity on the finish makes for easy drinking. Very good.*

2010 Kosta Browne Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 4,940 cases, \$58. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. Very complex aromatic profile with scents dancing in and out over time in the glass including black cherries, black raspberries, nutmeg, clove and cedar. Mouthfilling essence of dark red cherries, berries and plums with a hint of oak spice. Mouthwatering acidity, mild, soft tannins, and appreciable length on the cherry-laden finish. Very good (+).*



2010 Kosta Browne Keefer Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 1,177 cases, \$78. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Characteristic Keefer nose of cherries, strawberries, bark and spice. Delicious earth-kissed dark red cherry and berry flavors with a hint of minerality, oak and tutti-fruitti. Restrained tannins, bright acidity, and a very long finish that offers an encore of bright fruit. Very good (+).*



2010 Kosta Browne Koplen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 780 cases, \$78. *Medium deep purple color in the glass. Bright and alive in the glass with aromas of earthy dark raspberries, sassafras and spice. Intense, but not too intense flavors of dark red and black berries with an attractive savage character. Well-balanced tannins, very soft in the mouth, finishing with echoes of gorgeous fruit. Plenty of fireworks in the mouth.*



2010 Kosta Browne Kanzler Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 458 cases, \$78. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Demure aromas of perfectly ripe cherries and berries with hints of malt and granite. Still young and a bit muddled at this early stage, but plenty of dark plum and blackberry fruit singing. Very appealing soft fruit intensity. The most striking feature is the length of the finish, like a three hour movie you don't want to end. Much better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Hold onto this one or decant if you must saddle up soon.*



2010 Kosta Browne Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 1,615 cases, \$78. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is spectacular. Aromas of candied cherries, black raspberries, tea leaf, and Chinese 5-spice. Full-bodied, but light on its feet with luscious flavors of dark berries and black currants caressed by supple tannins and underlain with good acidity. The flavors search out every nook and cranny in the mouth. Very spicy. Still great the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle predicting age ability.*



2010 Kosta Browne Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 272 cases, \$72. *Moderately deep red rose color in the glass. Intensely fruity on the nose and palate, featuring dark red cherries and raspberries, finishing strong with a spry tang. Appealing finesse with a pillowy soft mouth feel. Still great the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good (+).*

2010 Kosta Browne Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 404 cases, \$78. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of brambly dark red and black berries, forest floor*

and spice. Appealing dark berry and spiced plum flavors robed in supple tannins, finishing with very impressive staying power and a little warmth. Not as expressive as it will be and needs more time in the cellar. Very good.

2010 Kosta Browne Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 154 cases, \$78. Moderately dark purple hue in the glass. Shy aromas of black cherries, blackberries, Asian spice and sweet pipe smoke. Rich flavors of spiced dark stone fruits and berries supported by firm fruit tannins, finishing with the long scent of sous-bois and ripe berries, and a touch of heat. The most heft of the three Santa Lucia Highlands bottlings, typical of this vineyard. Nicely outfitted with prominent spice the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.



2010 Kosta Browne 4-Barrel California Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 351 cases, \$78. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Demure, pretty aromas of exotic berries with a complimentary hint of vanilla and spice. Exceptional fruit flavor and the most polished wine in the KB lineup. An ephemeral blend of black raspberry and boysenberry flavors with an underpinning of nutmeg spice. Great purity of fruit. Supple tannins, a beguiling satiny texture and endless length on the finish. The biggest wine, but a complete and sophisticated wine. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. An All-American. Consider yourself very lucky if you are able to snag a bottle or two of this gem.



2010 Kosta Browne One Sixteen Russian River Valley Chardonnay 512 cases, \$58. Light straw color in the glass. Aromas of apple and lemon with a hint of diacetyl. Flavorful, crisp and dry, featuring notes of pear, golden apple and crusty bread, finishing with subtle tannins and moderate fruit intensity. Not imposing and overtly fruity as many Russian River Valley Chardonnays, offering a pleasing but not extraordinary drinking experience. Good (+).

La Crema

The La Crema Pinot Noirs have inched up in price in recent years, but the wines continue to deliver consistency and impressive quality considering the relatively large case production. Widely distributed in the retail marketplace and restaurants, you can't go wrong buying or ordering a La Crema Pinot Noir. The wines are all appellation blends that call upon the vast Pinot Noir vineyard holdings of Jackson Family Wines. Winemaker Melissa Stackhouse has departed for J Vineyards & Winery, but the current winemaker, Elizabeth Grant-Douglas, is equally talented.

2010 La Crema Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.56, 5,800 cases, \$40. A majority of the fruit comes from the estate Laughlin and Piner vineyards, focusing on Pommard, 23, 777, 115 and 667 clones. The remainder of the fruit comes from long term growers that bring Martini, 828 and 2A clones to the blend. 100% de-stemmed, 70% whole berries in tank, 5-day cold soak, fermented in open-tops, aged in 30% new French oak for 9 months, racked only for blending before bottling. Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Well-perfumed with aromas of black cherries, cola, spice, sandalwood and fennel. Moderately intense flavors of black cherries, cola and toasted oak. Ripe, bold and structured with firm, but giving tannins. A classic window into Russian River Valley terroir that is very approachable now. Good (+).

Longboard Vineyards

Israeli-born, surfer dude, winegrower and winemaker Oded Shakked joined Longboard Vineyards in Healdsburg in 2005 and soon became the sole owner. He built surfboards in his early twenties and his love of surfing and wine brought him to California. He studied winemaking at University of California at Davis and worked harvests in Napa and Bordeaux, but was most attracted the Sonoma County. He currently produces multiple red and white varietals including Pinot Noir from purchased grapes. The tasting room in Healdsburg features a redwood surfboard bar and a plasma television showing surf videos.

2008 Longboard Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 1,450 cases, \$33. Sourced from O'Neel, Ledbetter, Rochioli and Webber vineyards. Aged in 35% new French oak. Moderately light reddish-

purple color in the glass. Deeply fragrant initially with aromas of Bing cherries and baking spice, developing scents of sous-bois and stem over time in the glass. Medium weight core of black cherry flavor with hints of cola and tar robed in soft, supple tannins. Decent.

2010 Longboard Vineyards Flying Rooster Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$42. From a vineyard located in the Petaluma Gap region of the Sonoma Coast. 100% de-stemmed, 3-day cold soak, aged in French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of fresh cherry pie glaze, red berries and forest floor, becoming more intense and pleasing over time in the glass. Middleweight flavors of perfectly ripe cherries and raspberries with complimentary notes of spice and tea, finishing long with a good cut of acidity. Very supple tannins make for easy drinking. Read to go now. Very good.*



MacPhail Family Wines

MacPhail is a Pinot Noir specialist producing a broad palette of wines since 2002. Owner/winemaker James MacPhail works out of a modern winery in Healdsburg. MacPhail trained with Merry Edwards and his wines reflect her style. Production is just under 5,000 cases, with bottlings from the Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, Anderson Valley, Santa Barbara County and the Willamette Valley of Oregon. MacPhail is also the winemaker for Sequanna. The wine label and marketing program are very eye-catching and the wines usually do not disappoint. I find the oak treatment on the wines, especially in 2010, to be too obvious, but it is a personal bias and may be welcomed by others. The winery is not open to the public but offers tours and tasting by invitation and appointment on weekdays (707-433-4780).



2010 MacPhail The Flyer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.61, TA 0.62, 180 cases, \$59. Released spring 2012. From Olivet Grange Vineyard. Clones 667, 777 and 828. 100% de-stemmed. 5-day cold soak, native fermentations, aged 11 months sur lies in 50% new French oak. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of herbal and coffee-scented oak. Middleweight flavors of black cherries and cola with noticeable oak in the background. Mild tannins and relatively soft in the mouth. A superb vineyard source, but the fruit doesn't shine at this early stage. Undistinguished now, but should improve over time aided by more integration of oak. Decent.*

2010 MacPhail Pratt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.60, 223 cases, \$49. Released spring 2012. Clones 23, 828, 777 and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native fermentations, aged 11 months sur lies in 50% new French oak from multiple coopers. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Rather shy, with delicate aromas of fresh berries and cut grass. Full-bodied core of dark red and black fruits with hints of cola and dark chocolate, supported by oak-driven accents in the background. Supple tannins and notable dark fruit-driven aromatic persistence on the finish. Good now, but still very young and in need of cellaring for another two to three years.*

2010 MacPhail Wightman House Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., pH 3.80, TA 0.56, 132 cases, \$55. Released spring 2012. 100% Martini clone. MacPhail is the sole producer from this tiny 2-acre vineyard. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native fermentations, aged 11 months sur lies in 50% new French oak from multiple coopers. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Light reddish-purple color in the glass. Perfume of black cherries, dark red raspberries, spice and rose petals. Moderately rich flavors echo the nose with very supple tannins. Pleasant and fruity, but the layers of toast and caramel secondary to aging in French oak are too much for my taste. More time in bottle should allow better integration of oak. Good.*

2010 MacPhail Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.59, 155 cases, \$49. Released spring 2012. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold maceration, indigenous fermentations, aged 11 months in 50% new French oak from multiple coopers. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. The fifth vintage from this iconic vineyard and always my favorite MacPhail bottling. Dijon 115 and 777 and Pommard clones. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. The nose is closed for business, offering subtle aromas of tobacco and oak with little dark fruit. Very soft and smooth in the mouth, with full-bodied flavors of black plum, black raspberry and blackberry with a hint of dark chocolate and cola. Very charming fruit that only offers a glimpse of its true potential. Much better integration of oak and a seductive fruit-filled finish. Don't even think about opening this one for two to three years. Significantly more demonstrative aromatic and flavor presence the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good (+).*



2010 MacPhail Toulouse Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., pH 3.83, TA 0.61, 350 cases, \$49. Released spring 2012. Clones 2A, 667, 115 and 777. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native fermentations, aged 11 months sur lie in 50% new French oak from several coopers. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. New oak scents dominate the nose, entry and finish. Herb-tinged dark red cherry and berry fruit flavors with plenty of oak driven toffee and coffee accents. Good structural integrity with fine-grain tannins, but lacks vigor and finishes with a little heat. Decent.*

2010 MacPhail Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir 290 cases, \$20. Released spring 2011. Selection from all Sonoma Coast vineyard sources. Clones 667, 777, 828, 115 and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed with whole berries to fermenter. Saigné after a 1-2-day cold soak, inoculated with champagne yeast, native malolactic fermentation. Bottled February 23, 2011. *Blood orange color in the glass. Aromas of strawberries, leather and dried herbs (marjoram, sage and fennel seed). Flavors of strawberries, pomegranate, peach and melon with an herbal undertone. Decent acidity and vibrancy. Has respectable body and drinks more like a still Pinot. Good.*

Pali Wine Co.

Founded in 2005 by partners Tim Perr and Scott Knight from Pacific Palisades, California, Pali produces vineyard-designated Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from multiple vineyard sources in California and Oregon. A second group of value-priced offerings, the Cuvée Program, explores appellation-specific Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The winemakers are Aaron Walker, who previously assisted Brian Loring at Loring Wine Co., and consultant Kenneth Juhasz (Auteur, Robert Stemmler, The Donum Estate). The tasting room is located at the winery at 1036 W Aviation Drive in Lompoc and is open Friday and Saturday 11-4 and Monday-Thursday by appointment. A new tasting room is planned in Santa Barbara's "Funk Zone."

2010 Pali Wine Co. Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., 140 cases, \$50, screw cap. Clones 114, 777 and Pommard. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Very nicely perfumed with bright aromas of red cherries and raspberries with a hint of*

sandalwood. *On the lighter side, even a bit shallow on the attack, with red cherry and berry flavors lifted by bright acidity. The tannins tend to outweigh the fruit at present. Good.*

2010 Pali Wine Co. Windsor Oaks Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 15.3% alc., 310 cases, \$50, screw cap. From a 250-acre vineyard in the warmer eastern reaches of the Russian River Valley. Aged 10 months in 50% new French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding initially, emerging slowly with swirling, offering very ripe aromas of dark red berries and black cherries, citrusy cranberries and peach. Moderately intense red berry and black cherry core with a hint of fennel and sage, soft and sweet on the mid palate, offering flamboyant dry tannins and a touch of heat on the finish. Decent.*

2010 Pali Wine Co. Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 100 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 115, 667 and Pommard 5. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Pleasing aromas of strawberries and raspberries with a hint of saffron and rose petals. Tasty essence of red berries with a subtle herbal bent, offering some length on the generous and dry finish. Supple tannins and very approachable now. Still appealing the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*



2010 Pali Wine Co. Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 15.8% alc., 100 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 667, 777, 115 and Pommard 4. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak. *Moderately dark purple color in the glass. Earthy nose perfumed with scents of compost, dark stone and berry fruits and dark chocolate. Mid-weight flavors of black plums, blackberries and currants with a hint of oak-driven graham and dark chocolate notes. The pedigree of the fruit really shows through. Firmly structured, but pleasing to drink, leaving a bit of heat in its wake on the finish, especially as it warms in the glass. Still appealing the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Made well in its style, and has the tannins and fruit to stand up to the high alcohol, but still a little too boozy for me. Good (+).*

2010 Pali Wine Co. Cargasacchi Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 100 cases, \$54, screw cap. From a 16-acre vineyard located at the far western edge of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. Clone 115. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of spicy red berries and confected plum. Earth-kissed dark red berries and black plum flavors with underlying oak accents, offering a smooth mouth feel and finishing with good aromatic intensity, albeit a touch hot. Good (+).*

2010 Pali Wine Co. Rancho la Viña Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 15.7% alc., 100 cases, \$54, screw cap. *Dark and inky purple in color. Brooding and dull on the nose with demure aromas of black fruits. Full-bodied array of black Pinot fruits include black currants and raisin wrapped in muscular, dry tannins, finishing short and hollow. Powerful, fruit-driven and Syrah-like, lacking in seductive pinotosity. Decent.*

Seagrape Wine Company

Karen Steinwachs is a refugee from the high-tech world who learned her winemaking under Kathy Joseph at Fiddlehead and is now the winemaker for Buttonwood Farm Winery. Her spouse, Dave, is a techie with expertise in computers and logistics, who offers wineries warehousing, marketing, website and e-commerce solutions, and logistics through Vintegrated Solutions. Together they launched their own label, Seagrape Wine Company, specializing in Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Santa Barbara County grape sources. The name, Seagrape, comes from their island backgrounds. Dave came from the British Isles and Karen lived part of her life in St. Croix. They manage to maintain their islands connection by always vacationing somewhere in the tropics.

The Seagrape tree (*Coccoloba uvifera*) that is displayed on the label is found near seaside beaches and is a visual reminder of both their winemaking roots and their love of the islands. If you have attended the World of Pinot Noir, you probably have seen their smiling faces, working tirelessly to make this event a success.

Karen is a fan of whole cluster, but the percentage, which varies from zero to 100% is decided at the time of harvest and field grape sort. New French oak percentages are very modest (5%-25% each year). Time in barrel depends on maturation of tannins and bottling aging of at least six months before release is standard.

Tasting of Seagrape wines is available at Avant Tapas & Wine in Buellton, D'Vine Wine Bar and Taste of Sta. Rita Hills, both in Lompoc.



2010 Seagrape Wine Co. "Jump Up" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir

14.5% alc., 200 cases, \$32. This blend is named after a kind of street party that occurs throughout the Caribbean. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of dark red berries, spice and leaf, picking up intensity over time in the glass. Elegant on the palate, with a zip of acidity and supple tannins. The flavors of black cherries and red raspberries are complimented by very subtle oak. A spirited drink that exudes finesse, and is highly enjoyable now. Very good.*



2010 Seagrape Wine Co. Rancho la Viña Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 25 cases \$34.

From a vineyard located at the southern edge of the Sta. Rita Hills. Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose offers a mash of darker berries with a hint of oak and spice. Moderately light and elegant in style, with flavors of deep red strawberries, raspberries and blackberries. Very smooth on the palate. Nicely crafted and nothing to detract, but lacks a bit of flavor intensity and finishing strength. Could pick up heft with more time in the bottle. Good.

Ulises Valdez

Ulises Valdez is an American success story. A native of Michoacan, Mexico, Ulises crossed the border in 1985 at the age of 16, and traveled to Sonoma County to join his older brother who was working in the vineyards. Although underage and unable to speak English, he was able to obtain a job pruning vines based on his skills and soon realized that vineyard work was his calling. Like many migrant workers, he lived in humble conditions and rode a bicycle to work in the vineyards. He received amnesty in 1986, and achieved citizenship in 1996. Ulises became a partner in Florence Vineyard Management Company, and in 2003, bought Jack Florence Jr's stake in the company, changing the name to Valdez & Sons Vineyard Management, Inc.. Based in Cloverdale, his grape clients now include many all-stars in the wine business including Paul Hobbs, Mark Aubert, Kent Rosenblum and Jayson Pahlmeyer.

Ulises now farms 1,000 acres of vineyards in Sonoma County and has a reputation as one of the county's hardest working vineyard managers and growers. Ulises also has 120 acres that he leases or owns including the Ulises Valdez ("UV") Vineyard in the Russian River Valley, the UV El Diablo Vineyard in the Russian River Valley, and Lancel Creek Vineyard and Silver Eagle Ranch, both near Occidental.

In 2006, he launched Valdez Family Wines, marking 20 years in the wine business. His friends, Paul Hobbs and Mark Aubert helped initially as consulting winemakers for the new label. In 2010, the 2008 Valdez Silver Eagle Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay was served at a White House State dinner honoring President Felipe Calderón of Mexico.


In 2010, Ulises leased a winery facility in Cloverdale. Zinfandel (currently five different bottlings) and other hearty reds (Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon) as well as Chardonnay have always been identified with Ulises Valdez Wines, and the Pinot Noirs, which have been bold, extracted and machismo in style (showing the influence of consultant winemaker Mark Aubert), are undergoing a downsizing under the direction of young winemaker Mauricio Soto, beginning with the 2009 vintage, offering less muscle and more nuance and complexity. The Pinot Noir program is quite small and currently being scaled back (only four barrels of the 2011 vintage when I visited Mauricio at the winery in May 2012), but Mauricio is a Pinot Noir fancier, and he hopes to expand the program. Certainly, Ulises has access to a number of highly regarded Pinot Noir vineyards in Sonoma County. I barrel tasted the 2011 UV Vineyard Pinot Noir (Calera clone - exotic nose and flavors - terrific), the 2011 Lancel Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir (Pommard 5 and 777 - darker fruit, more acidity, more length on the finish), and the 2011 Manzanita Vineyard Pinot Noir (Calera clone - dark plum, hardy tannins, huge finish). The three vineyards are to be blended into a single Pinot Noir for the 2011 vintage, a total of 100 cases. This should be a special, even spectacular Pinot Noir.



Every Saturday from 11-5, Ulises can be found with his wife at his Cloverdale tasting room, sharing his wines and many stories with visitors. Having spent a little time with him and his larger than life personality, I can only imagine what a unique experience this must be. Visit www.valdezfamilywinery.com. The 2009 vintage red wines and the 2010 vintage Chardonnays will be released by July 2012.

2008 Ulises Valdez Silver Eagle Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$60. Calera clone. *Deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black plum, dark berries, spice and oak with a hint of heat. Rough hewn with slightly astringent tannins, offering full-bodied, sappy flavors of blackberries and plum reduction sauce framed by noticeable oak, finishing with some alcohol-driven warmth. Decent.*

2009 Ulises Valdez Lancel Creek Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$60. Pommard and 777 clones. Aged in 40% new French oak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Primarily oak-driven aromas with subtle notes of dark fruits. Intensely fruity featuring blackberries and black plum flavors with an underpinning of dark chocolate, offering an appealing plush velvet mouth feel. A little softer and more gentle than the 2008 Silver Eagle Pinot Noir. Still a bit rugged and tannic and needs more time in bottle to mellow. Well-crafted in its style. Good (+).*

 **2010 Ulises Valdez U.V. El Diablo Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.7% alc., \$50. Barrel fermented, 100% MLF. *Light straw color with slight haze (unfiltered) in the glass. Aromatically pleasing with notes of yeast, buttered popcorn, white peach and citrus peel. Very tasty core of baked pear, apple, pie crust and tropical fruit flavors with complimentary oak. Crisp and lively with a hint of tannin and a dry finish. A dead wringer for one of Aubert's top Chardonnays.*



Valerie's Vineyard

A single wine lovingly sourced from a 1-acre vineyard in the Carneros region of Sonoma County. Forget small, we are talking less than 100 cases. This vineyard is a group-managed affair, the result of a partnership between long time Sonoma County PR person Michael Coats, his wife Valerie, her parents and sister, and Chuck Hanson, a noted wine buyer for Hi-Time Cellars in Costa Mesa, California, and Jerry Hanson. Each of the partners share equally in the work of the vineyard which is organically farmed and overseen by noted viticulturist Phil Cotourri. The wine is crafted by B.R. Cohn Winery winemaker, Tom Montgomery.

The wine may be acquired by e-mailing valeriesvineyard@gmail.com or visiting the Hi-Time Cellars website at www.hittimewine.net. The wine can sometimes be found at fine restaurants in Sonoma Valley and New York. The wine sells out quickly every year.



2010 Valerie's Vineyard "One Acre" Carneros Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 58 cases, \$40. 8th vintage. Aged 18 months in new and 2-year-old French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Intriguing nose offering scents of dark red berries, earth, black pepper and coffee. Hits the mid palate with a vengeance, empowered with attention grabbing flavors of blackberries, plum, cola, mushroom, tobacco and spice. Very well-crafted with a seamless character, plush on the palate, with well-proportioned tannins, and a long, long finish. A very unique and interesting wine that you will want to spend considerable time with. Great the following the day as well from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.*



Vivier Wines

The husband and wife team of Stephané and Dana Vivier bring a Burgundian sensibility to wines made from California and Willamette Valley grapes. Winemaker Stephané grew up in Meloisey, Burgundy in the Hautes-Côtes de Beaune. He obtained advanced degrees in viticulture and enology from Université de Bourgogne in Dijon, and subsequently worked in Switzerland, New Zealand and Sonoma. He was attracted to American vineyards where winemakers are not bound by tradition or AOC restrictions. Stephané became the winemaker at HdV (Hyde de Villaine) in Carneros in 2002, and remains at that position. His spouse, Dana, brings the business acumen and viticulture skills to their partnership.



2011 Vivier Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$18. *Light orange-coral color in the glass. Delicate, but very attractive aromas of red berries and orange flower water. Tasteful core of strawberries, cranberries and blood oranges, offering moderate body, minor fine-grain tannins, and admirable persistence on the very dry finish. A superb Rosé. Very good.*



2010 Vivier Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., sold out. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of red stone fruits, spice green leaf and cut flowers. Slightly confected flavors of red raspberries and red cherries with a savory herbal thread running through. Medium weight with some tannic backbone and mild length on the finish which has a hint of aromatic oak. A solid, well-crafted wine, that has a slightly under ripe fruit character. Good.*

2010 Vivier Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., sold out. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black plum, black cherry, grape and spice. Middleweight flavors of darker fruits including black raspberries, with an accent of spice, oak and savage. A pretty, seamless wine. Very good.*



2010 Vivier Sun Chase Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc. \$54. From a vineyard in the Petaluma Gap region at 1200 feet elevation above the fog. Clone 777. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Complex nose offering a panoply of aromas including dark plums, blackberry jam, sassafras, and cardamom spice. Delicious essence of fresh dark berries, nicely spiced, with a hint of sous-bois, dried rose petal and oak. Moderately rich and nicely balanced, with a velvety texture. Ready for current drinking, but will age. Still terrific the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle when my wife and I polished the bottle off.*



Watkins Family Winery

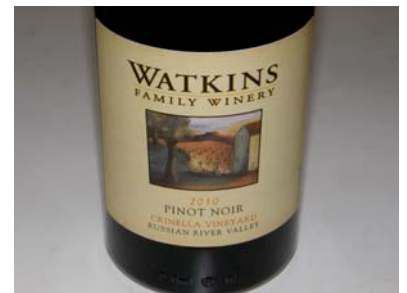
A small, family owned winery in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, that has been producing boutique wines since 1979. Winemaker Randall Watkins holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Davis and has worked at Buena Vista Winery, Hartford Family Winery, S. Anderson Vineyards, and Carmen Vineyards in Chile. In 1999, he obtained a master's degree in enology from University of California at Davis, and became the winemaker at Carmenet Winery and Moon Mountain Vineyard. Currently, he is a consulting winemaker for new wine brands while crafting the wines for Watkins Family Winery.

The Crinella Vineyard is located in Green Valley, planted in Goldridge soil known for its low vigor and excellent drainage. Through the years, fruit from this vineyard has been supplied to DuMOL, Merry Edwards, Siduri and Kosta Browne.

The Watkins Family wines are available at www.watkinsfamilywinery.com. The label features a painting of the well-known Sonoma Valley artist Michael Holland depicting the Watkins Family Estate Vineyard on Taylor Mountain.

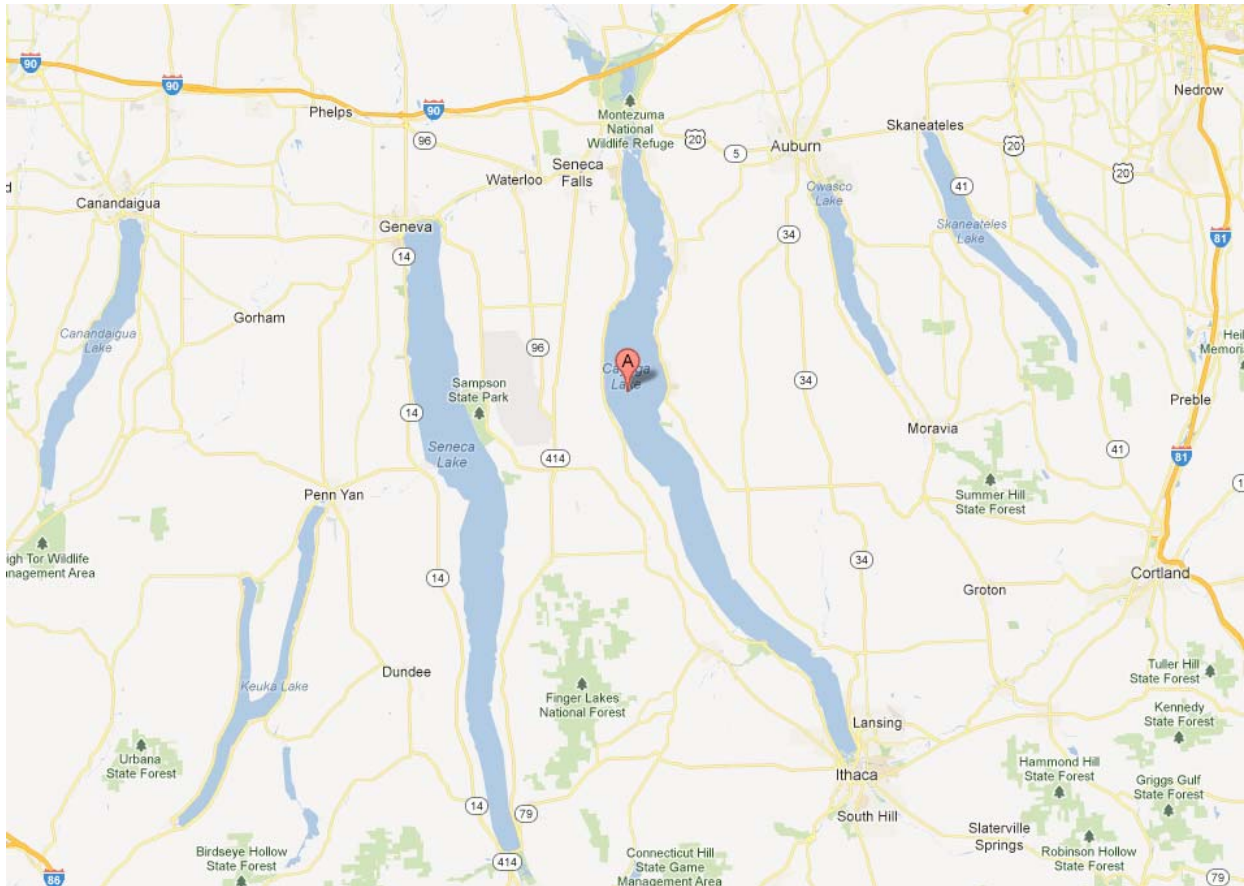
2009 Watkins Family Winery Crinella Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 198 cases, \$40. Clones are Mt. Eden, 115, 777 and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, aged 18 months in French oak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely fruited nose, offering aromas of black cherries and black raspberries. Juicy and crisp on the palate, with a tasty core of black cherries augmented by oak, wrapped in supple tannins, finishing with moderate depth on the finish. Good (+).*

2010 Watkins Family Winery Crinella Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, dark red berries, bramble and pine needle. Middleweight flavors of black cherry liquor, with notes of strawberries and spice, offering an easy drinking experience driven by soft tannins, refreshing acidity and admirable intensity and length on the cherry-driven finish. Very good.*



Heart & Hands Wine Company: Pinot Noir Off the Beaten Trail

I originally ran across Tom Higgins several years ago at Thirsty Owl Wine Company in the Finger Lakes wine region of New York. He had experienced winemaking in Bordeaux and at Calera Wine Company before working at Thirsty Owl and Atwater Estate Vineyards. He and his spouse, Susan, found a suitable site for a vineyard and winery on a gently sloping hillside overlooking the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake. The site was ideal for Pinot Noir and Riesling, with soils redolent of Onondaga formation limestone with outcroppings of shale. The proximity to the lake and the gently sloping site offer the vineyard protection from harsh winter weather, the biggest threat to winegrowing in this northerly region



Grapes are sourced from Hobbit Hollow Vineyard (west side of Skaneateles Lake, Pinot Noir), Patrician Verona Vineyard (west side of Cayuga Lake, Riesling), Elaine's Vineyard (overlooks the eastern shores of Seneca Lake, Pinot Noir), and Nutt Road Vineyard (west side of Seneca Lake).

In 2008, a winery adjacent the Estate Vineyard was completed and a tasting room was opened the following year. Production is just under 1,500 cases annually of sparkling wine, Pinot Noir, white Pinot Noir (Polarity) and Riesling. I caught up with Tom at this year's World of Pinot Noir and he sent me a lineup of recent releases to review.

In the Finger Lakes, 2008 was an excellent vintage with warm days and cool nights during the summer and warm, dry weather in September and October. 2009 was only mildly less desirable, marked by a cool, moist summer and a dry and warm September. 2010 offered a mild winter and a hot and humid growing season with cooler seasonable temperatures in September.

When tasting the Pinot Noirs from Heart & Hands, you must have different expectations than you would experience tasting California Pinot Noirs. The wines must be taken in the context of their growing region. The plush fruit intensity is simply not there. The wines are more Old World, more austere, higher in acid, lower in alcohol, and less richly flavored. That said, they have a charm of their own. Riesling is the prized varietal in the Finger Lakes, but a small group of vintners, including Tom, are making strides with Pinot Noir.

2008 Heart and Hands Brut Rosé Finger Lakes Sparkling Wine 12.7% alc., pH 3.18, 33 cases. From Seneca Lake vineyards. Fermented 23 hours on the skins at 56 degrees for color extraction, whole cluster basket pressed, 16-day fermentation in stainless steel. Secondary fermentation in the bottle and the wine was disgorged on January 20, 2009. *Pale red raspberry color in the glass. Aromas of strawberries, yeast and petrichor. Crisp, with a good bead, and flavors of red berries and herbs with a spirited, acid-driven, dry finish. Good.*

2008 Heart and Hands Barrel Reserve Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.58, 195 cases, \$39.99. Yields 1.9 tons per acre from Sawmill Creek and Hobbit Hollow Vineyards. 100% whole cluster. Aged in 38% new Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, spice, vanillin, oak spice and stem. Light and elegant flavors of black cherries, cranberries and raspberries with a leafy, tea and herbal riff in the background. The tannins outweigh the fruit by a tad. Impressive finishing length. Good (+).*



2009 Heart and Hands Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 12.6% alc., pH 3.78, TA 0.61, 467 cases. Yields 2.1 tons per acre. Four vineyards with Sawmill Creek Vineyard making up 57% of the blend. Aged 12 months in 19% new Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Light red color in the glass. Aromas of ripe cherries, raisin, porto, spice and aromatic herbs. Light and soft in the mouth with herbal-toned red fruit flavors and a delicate finish. Decent (+).*

2009 Heart and Hands Barrel Reserve Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 12.7% alc. pH 3.71, TA 0.54, 324 cases. 100% whole cluster. Aged 18 months in 46% new and 54% used Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Moderately light red color in the glass. Ripe cherry and berry fruit on the nose with hints of marzipan and acetaldehyde. The most intensely flavored Pinot Noir in the lineup with the longest finish. Robust taste of black cherries and dark raspberries with plenty of supporting structural integrity. Good (+).*

2009 Heart and Hands Hobbit Hollow Vineyard Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 12.6% alc., pH 3.73, TA 0.61, 25 cases. Yields 1.9 tons per acre. Aged in 50% new Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Light reddish color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with fresh aromas of red cherry pie glaze, sandalwood and briar. Delicious core of well-ripened red cherries and berries. Crisp with some polish and length, but the tannins outweigh the fruit. Good.*



2010 Heart and Hands Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 12.4% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.61, 421 cases, \$20.99, Vino-Seal closure. Composed of three vineyard sources with 54% coming from Patrician Verona Vineyard. Aged 12 months in 29% new Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Very light red color in the glass. The nose picks up interest over time in the glass, showing pleasing aromas of red berries, red cherries, spice and bramble. Light in body, but offering pleasant flavors of fresh cherries and strawberries with an undertone of savory herbs, finishing with a tangy cherry note. Good (+).*

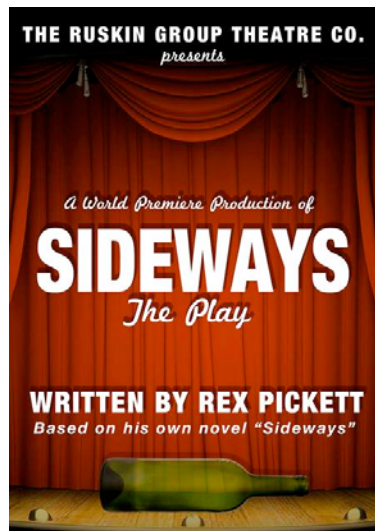


2010 Heart and Hands Polarity Finger Lakes White Pinot Noir 12.7% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.76, 81 cases, \$26.99. Whole cluster pressed with limited skin contact. Fermented in barrels with lees stirring post-fermentation. Aged 9 months in barrel. *Delicate orange color. A chameleon of a nose with aromas changing constantly, the most notable of which are strawberries, white peaches, buttered brioche, vanilla and herbs. Delicious and soft and smooth in the mouth with an array of red and white fruit flavors that challenge your perception of Pinot Noir. The fruit is beautifully framed by bright acidity and the tannins are supple, combining to add to the contemplative experience. Simply put, a great wine.*



Pinot Briefs

‘SIDEWAYS: The Play’ The Ruskin Group Theatre Co. in Santa Monica, California is presenting Rex Pickett’s ‘SIDEWAYS: The Play’ May 18 through August 18, 2012. The play is adapted by Rex Pickett from his novel that spawned the very popular 2004 movie, and is directed by Amelia Mulkey. I attended a performance recently and thorough enjoyed the intimacy of the small theater and the presentation. The play does not duplicate the film, offering scenes from the book that were excluded from the movie. There is clever switching among various settings, and of course, the highlight of the play is the memorable scene where Miles downs a spit bucket of wine. Complimentary Pinot Noir tasting before, during (intermission), and after the play adds to the charm while Rex Pickett holds presence at the wine bar. Pickett’s screenplay for ‘SIDEWAYS’ is enshrined with a plaque on the wall of the Writers Guild of America Theater as one of the 101 Greatest Screenplays in the history of motion pictures. Pickett is currently writing a pilot for HBO, a script for Barbara Shock called On Tour with Max, and pushing director Alexander Payne to film a sequel based on his second novel, *Vertical*. Follow him at Facebook.com/SidewaysthePlay. For tickets, visit www.rushkingrouptheatre.org.

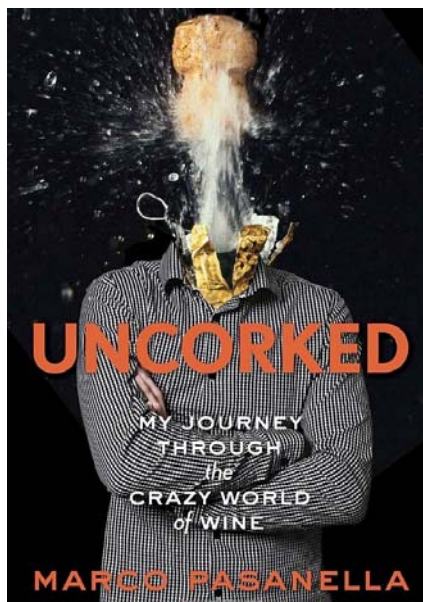


New Zealand Pinot Noir on Film Pinot Noir NZ 2013 will be held on the Wellington Waterfront January 28-31, 2013. To celebrate this upcoming event, a video has been released showing the beauty, depth and character of New Zealand Pinot Noir. You can view it at www.pinotnz.co.nz. Pinot Noir NZ only happens once every three years and it is the biggest event on the New Zealand Wine calendar. Over 110 different producers will show more than 300 wines. A long list of wine experts will attend including Jasper Morris MW, Matt Kramer, Lisa Perrotti Brown MW, Tim Atkin MW, Ned Goodwin MW, and Matthew Jukes. The event will be opened by Sam Neill, movie star and proprietor of Two Paddocks. This is the fifth time Pinot Noir NZ has been held, spanning the last 15 years of New Zealand Pinot Noir. Registrations can be made at www.pinotnz.co.nz.

Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance “Wine & Fire” The 2012 “Wine & Fire events will take place over the weekend of August 17-19, 2012. Open houses, special tastings, an educational seminar at Fiddlestix (“The Fire Within - Why Winemakers Choose Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the Sta. Rita Hills”), and the Grand Tasting at the historic La Purisima Mission are scheduled. A weekend passport is also included, providing access to wineries and tasting rooms of Alliance members. All-inclusive tickets are \$175. For additional information and tickets, visit www.staritahills.com.

Paulée Restaurant Opens in Dundee, OR Chef Daniel Mondok and Master Sommelier Brandon Tebbe unveiled a modern rustic eatery in the Willamette Valley with an opening on May 30, 2012. Located on Highway 99W next door to The Inn at Red Hills, Paulée has two distinct dining areas: one with a more intimate, upscale feel and the other a more casual vibe. The eclectic menu features ingredients sourced from local farms and ranches in the Willamette Valley. The cuisine is founded in classic French technique with Spanish and Asian influences, with menus changing daily. 66 wines are offered by the glass, preserved under Enomatic, keg or (sparkling wine) Perlage systems. A small tasting room is planned, featuring wines from small producers that don’t have their own tasting rooms. For more information, visit www.pauleerestaurant.com.

Uncorked: My Journey Through the Crazy World of Wine Marco Pasanella clearly states the theme of this melodramatic book that is based on his very personal journey founding and developing a successful wineshop in lower Manhattan: “What about doing what you love, living where you work, creating the life you dreamed of?” The idea of owning a wineshop is enticing to many wine enthusiasts, but it can be a folly, replete with pitfalls as Pasanella discovers. He left a comfortable and successful, but eventually unrewarding life as a designer of hotels and housewares to establish Pasanella & Son Vintners in 2005. His tribulations with wine representatives, agony over wacky employees, and frustration in dealing with local politics and regulations are both humorous and tragic. In the end, his disappointments persist, but he is still upbeat, noting, “Yet these irritations pale in comparison to the satisfaction.” It appears he would do it again given the same circumstances and opportunity. As he weaves his memoir, he embellishes the dialogue with wine-friendly recipes and pertinent wine information, and finishes the story with an interesting appendix with sections on “The Five Biggest Misconceptions About Wine,” “Five Tips on Tasting Wine,” “Ten Ways to Taste Without Feeling Like A Snob,” and a number of useful “Toasts.” A very enjoyable read, especially with a good glass of Pinot Noir in hand. Hardbound, Clarkson Potter/Publisher, 214 pp, \$24.



Big Sur Food & Wine Festival One of my readers, Aengus Wagner, informed me of this terrific, relatively intimate festival To be held November 1-4, 2012, the festival has a number of events that would please Pinot Noir lovers: Calera Retrospective with Josh Jensen, Pinot and their Muse (a small panel of Pinot Noir producers will show which wine originally influenced them including Josh Jensen, Paul Lato, Andy Peay and Burt Williams), a Pinot Walkabout with about 30 specially invited and gifted Pinot Noir masters, Wine & Swine Dinner, Sierra Mar Vineyard Seminar with grower Gary Franscioni, and an Auction Lunch and Grand Public Tasting presented by the Post Ranch Inn. All this in the backdrop of beautiful Big Sur. Visit www.bigsurfoodandwine.org for further information and tickets.

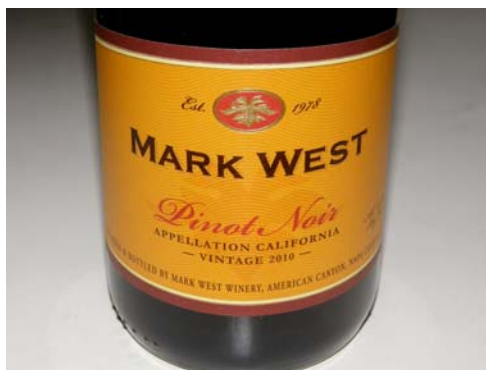


Moderate Consumption of Alcohol May Reduce Risk of RA A study published July 9, 2012 in the *British Medical Journal* involving 34,141 Swedish women found that women who regularly consumed more than three alcoholic drinks a week for at least 10 years had about half the risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis compared with abstainers. The decreased risk was consistent whether beer, wine or liquor were consumed. The effect may be explained by alcohol's actions in lowering the body's immune system.

Moderate Wine Consumption Can Protect Women's Bones A new study published in the journal *Menopause*, found that moderate alcohol consumption influences bone turnover. During menopause, the body constantly remakes bone, but the rate of resorption increases and the formation of new bone does not keep up with resorption, resulting in bone loss. Alcohol seems to slow down the bone turnover rate and may protect against fractures. The results should not be extrapolated to young women who are still building bone mass. A larger study is planned to confirm the findings.

California Vintners Turning to Chinese Marketplace The rising middle class in China and other Asian-Pacific countries is one the world's fastest-developing markets for wine, according to a report in the *Los Angeles Times* (July 5, 2012). \$62 million of wine was exported from the United States to China in 2011, a 42% increase from 2010, according to the California Wine Institute. It can be more profitable for California vintners to sell to China than to sell domestically. For years, Calera Wine Company has exported a significant amount of wine to Asia. Even value-priced labels in the \$20 to \$30 range can get in on the action as the Chinese economy is slowing and the Chinese are beginning to shift their devotion to California's elite brands to interest in value-priced brands.

Mark West Acquired by Constellation Constellation Brands, Inc., the world's leading premium wine company, has bought the Mark West wine brand from Purple Wine Company. Purple Wine Company was founded by Derek Benham in 2001 and is based in Graton, California. Mark West Pinot Noir has had a 35 percent volume growth rate in the last 3 months, is the nation's best-selling Pinot Noir, and is a leader in wine priced at \$10-\$12 retail. Mark West has shown double digit growth over the last 10 years and has grown into a 600,000 case brand sold primarily in the United States. Mark West currently offers a California Pinot Noir, a Russian River Valley Reserve Pinot Noir, and a Santa Lucia Highlands Reserve Pinot Noir.

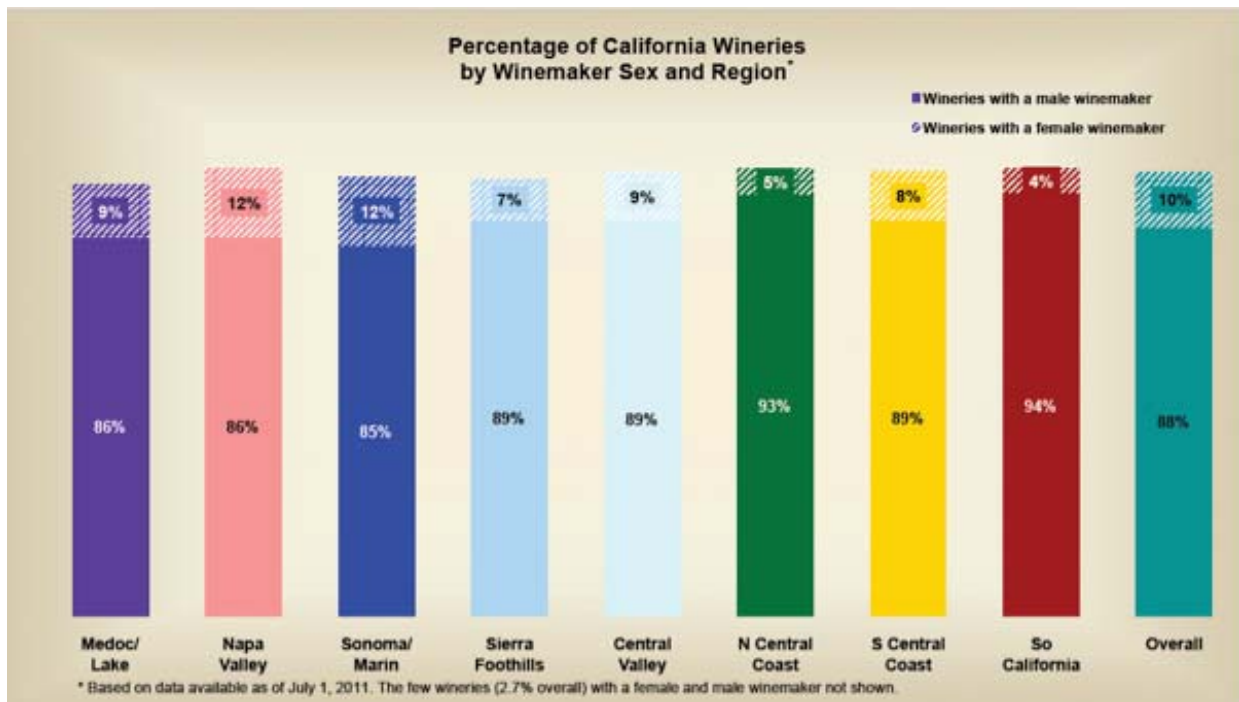


New Definition of Low-Alcohol Wine The International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV) has adopted new definitions of low-alcohol and de-alcoholized wines. The United States will not be affected as it does not belong to the OIV. The OIV resolution says, "Correcting the alcohol content of a particular wine is allowed with a maximum reduction of 20% of the original alcohol level. If the alcohol content of the wine is reduced by more than 20%, it will fall under a dealcoholization process...the resulting product shall not be presented as wine, since it will not comply with the established definition." Products with an alcohol content of between 0.5 and 8.5 percent will be defined as "having been obtained by partial dealcoholization," while those below 0.5 percent are defined as "dealcoholized." Permitted alcohol reduction techniques are partial vacuum evaporation (spinning cone), membrane techniques (including reverse osmosis) and distillation. The organization is working on definitions for wines that have undergone more than 20% alcohol reduction but still respect the minimum alcohol level for wine and special wine (8.5% vol).

Wineflite Shipping Many wine enthusiasts have been faced with the challenge of shipping home purchased wine during their travels. Wineflite allows you to purchase any amount of wine, take it with you to where you are staying or leave it at will call at the winery or wine shop. Wineflite picks up the wine, packages it for shipping, and ships it to your home or office. The wine can be shipped anywhere, worldwide. Visit www.wineflite.com for information.

Oregon Wine The App Wine writer Katherine Cole has developed a mobile application, Oregon Wine The App, that can be downloaded for \$2.99 in the iTunes store. Once downloaded, the app can be used without wireless service. It provides the user the ability to search for vineyards and wineries by appellations, producer details including featured wines, annual production and other “geeky” information, maps, dining and restaurant recommendations, vintage details, etc. The app currently lists 110 wineries but more will be added with updates. Katherine Cole is the author of *Voodoo Vintners* and writes wine columns for the FOODday section of *The Oregonian* newspaper and *MIX* magazine.

Research Shows Women Winemakers More Highly Acclaimed A report by Lucia Albino Gilbert, PhD and John Carl Gilbert, PhD, both of Santa Clara University (“Evidence of Women Winemakers’ Success in a Male-Dominated Field” at www.womenwinemakers.com), found that although California wineries with women winemakers are far fewer in number compared to their male counterparts, the wines produced from wineries with women winemakers are more highly acclaimed proportional to their presence in the field than those having male winemakers. A significantly higher percentage of wineries having women winemakers are listed in *Opus Vino* (work authored by wine critics and writers that is evidence of winery quality). 23% of the California wineries with women winemakers were listed as compared to 14.1% of wineries with male winemakers. The authors point out, “Unfortunately, having their wines more highly acclaimed may lead to the erroneous conclusion that women winemakers are far more numerous than they are.” Table below is from www.womenwinemakers.com.



Wine Riot Fueled by wine-loving Millennials, Wine Riot is a non-intimidating place where people can learn about wine. Winery booths, crash courses, mobile app, photo booth, temporary tattoos, GoVino wine glasses, DJ, and food. The first Wine Riot in San Francisco is August 3-4, and the continuing national tour arrives in New York September 21-22 and Los Angeles November 10. Check out the fun at www.facebook.com/thesecondglass and www.secondglass.com/wineriot/.



Oak: Finding a Happy Medium

A noted wine writer once commented that wineries should provide a simile of a tea bag filled with oak chips with each bottle of wine they sell so the consumer can adjust the oak aromas and flavors to their taste. Pinot Noir loves expensive French oak, since it compliments its flavors and aromatics, adding more complexity and interest, not to mention providing tannins, adding texture and influencing the finished color of the wine. However, drinkers vary widely in their personal taste for oak, with some preferring no oak at all in their Pinot Noir. Many drinkers say they like “just the right amount of oak flavor,” mirroring the proverbial scenario in Goldilocks and the Three Bears (not too hot nor too cold, but just right).

It is surprising to think of all the aromas and flavors that oak barrels can impart to Pinot Noir. I have compiled a list for reference:

Earthy: ash, musty, leather, mushroom, shoe box

Herbaceous: green wood, weedy, dill, bay leaf, sage, savory, spearmint, mint, Asian 5-spice, black and white pepper, Moroccan spices, potpourri, mown hay, menthol, wintergreen, grass, tobacco, dried flowers, leaf, pharmaceutical

Woody: cedar, pine, pine pitch, pine needles, sandalwood, redwood, tree bark, sawdust, pencil shavings, cigar box, old box, bramble, sap, tar, resin, oak

Spicy: clove, nutmeg, dill, cardamom, licorice, cinnamon, coconut, vanilla, toasted vanilla bean

Sweet: brown sugar, burnt sugar, bourbon, cotton candy, chocolate, cocoa, maple syrup, butterscotch, hot fudge, caramel, molasses, honey toffee, soy sauce, Coca-Cola, Dr. Pepper, cherry cola, Kahlua

Creamy: vanilla, cream soda, marshmallow, lactic, butter

Yeasty: popcorn, baked bread, bread stick, brioche, cookie dough

Nutty: hazelnut, marzipan, walnut, almond, roasted nuts, furfural, peanut butter, coconut

Roasted: graham cracker, toasted bread, coffee, espresso, mocha, tea, rose hips tea, cereal

Smoky: barbecue, grilled meats, smoked meats, game, sauvage, bacon, sweet smoke, creosote, iodine, burnt sugar, char, toast, crème brûlée