



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 10, Issue 19 October 20, 2015

To understand
Pinot Noir, know
the land and
people

Aging Domestic Pinot Noir: Better or Just Different?

“The truth of wine aging is that it is unknown, unstudied, poorly understood, and poorly predicted.”

Winemaker Zelma Long

One of the wine enthusiasts I know is prone to say about wine, “It’s not ready to drink. It’s a baby, a Lolita.” Sometimes I wonder if he ever enjoys a bottle of wine, since he drinks with guilt, always thinking the wine might be even better with more age.

Judgments about when a wine will reach its peak are very speculative. No one can predict a wine’s apogee with accuracy. UC Davis chemist Sue Ebeler (*Wines & Vines*, August 2008) pointed out that one can forecast how long a wine will live, but it is impossible to tell what it will taste and smell like. For me, I don’t want to be encumbered with worrisome thoughts about how long to cellar a wine. I just pop the cork when I feel like drinking a wine.

The golden rule of cellaring wine is never to let wine slip past its prime. When a wine is over the hill, it will never come back to life. When you discover a wine at its peak, pull the cork on every bottle you own and party.

Most American Pinot Noir is ready to drink upon release, and although the wines can improve after a few years in bottle, they are usually not made for long-term aging. Noted wine writer and teacher, Kevin Zraly, wrote in the latest (2014) edition of *Windows on the World Complete Wine Course*, “It’s a common misconception that all wines improve with age. In fact, more than 90% of all top wines made in the world should be consumed within a year, and less than 1% of the world’s wines should be aged for more than 5 years.”

The French Wine Explorers *Wine e-Newsletter* article by sommelier Lauriann Greene-Solin addressed “The 20% Rule”: “Only 20% of wines have aging potential past one or two years. Why? Because they were not created with aging in mind. The winemaking techniques used for these wines favor fruitiness and freshness, not extraction of the dry matter and tannins needed for a wine to age well. They may also lack the quality to stand up to aging. Only quality wines evolve into something more interesting than they were in their youth.”

When I looked at what several noted wine writers had to say about aging wine (and limited comments on Pinot Noir specifically), including Tim Patterson (*Wines & Vines*), Kevin Zraly (*Windows on the World Complete Wine Course*), Jamie Goode (*The Science of Wine*), and Emile Peynaud (*The Taste of Wine*), and sommelier Lauriann Greene-Solin, the consensus indicated the following factors were most critical for wine longevity.

1. **Polyphenols**, including various tannins and anthocyanins (pigments), act as a natural preservative giving wine the potential for a long life and account for the transformation of wine over time. These chemical components neutralize oxygen and keep oxygen from causing the degradation of everything else in wine. As the tannins evolve and diminish over time, the oxidative process eventually causes browning of color, and tertiary aromas and flavors such as dried fruit, vegetal and nutty characters. The longer a wine is in contact with the skins before, during and after fermentation, the more tannin there will be in the finished wine. Aging in oak barrels also contributes more preservative tannins. Pinot Noir has less tannin and usually will not age as well as say Cabernet Sauvignon, which has more tannin.

2. **Acidity** (low pH and high acidity) is more crucial for white wines than red wines because whites lack red wines' polyphenols.
3. **Balance**. This is also a crucial factor in longevity. Balance represents a subjective perception of harmony between all of a wine's components that produce aromas, flavors and textural characteristics of taste, including acid, sugar, alcohol, tannin, fruit extract and oak, with no one element dominant.
4. **Whole Cluster** fermentation contributes tannins. Ted Lemon points out that adding some percentage of whole cluster adds aromatic freshness to older Pinot Noirs. "A Pinot Noir that is ten years old and has a percentage of whole cluster will be more aromatically complex than the same wine 100% de-stemmed."
5. **Quality**. "A wine cellar is not a wine hospital - bad wines don't get magically better with age, they just get older." (Dr. Vinny, *Wine Spectator*, 1/31-2/28, 2015) Not all quality wines are meant to be aged.
6. **Appellation or Typicity of Wine**. Some appellations have more aging potential than others. Red Burgundies, for example, can be aged a long time.
7. **Cellar Conditions**. None of the criteria mentioned above have any relevance if the wine is not cellared under ideal conditions. Most desirable is a constant temperature (50 to 59°F), absence of vibration and light, and high humidity. Heat for any prolonged period should be avoided as it accelerates premature aging of wine. A study at the American Chemical Society's 2014 National Meeting in San Francisco found that Sangiovese wine stored in conditions mimicking those of an Italian apartment without air conditioning (68° to 80°F had aged four times as fast as the same wine stored at 59° to 62°F. Other research shows that gradual variations in temperature are not as important as the total number of heat units that accumulate over time.
8. **Persistence**. Sommelier Lauriann Greene-Solin claims that if you count the number of seconds a wine's aromas last on your palate once you spit or swallow the wine can reveal the longevity of the wine. "If it lasts longer than 6 seconds, the aging potential is good. More than 8 seconds, and the wine will likely last a number of years in your cellar.
9. **High Alcohol**. High alcohol may not impair aging if it is in balance with other components of wine since it acts as an additional preservative. Sugar is also a preservative but this discussion centers on dry wines only.
10. **Size of Bottle**. Wine matures more slowly in magnums (1.5 liter bottles) and lasts longer.
11. **Vintage**. Some vintages provide better fruit, acid and tannin balance making the wines more age worthy.

The crux of the aging issue and specifically the aging of American Pinot Noir is that cellaring the wines only makes sense if you like the effects of aging on Pinot Noir. Pinot Noirs that have been cellared are definitely different, but whether they are better depends on the opinion of the drinker. Older Pinot Noir is often an acquired taste that comes from experience. The winery marketing machine often encourages buyers to cellar wines, but few consumers do, so they don't know what great aged Pinot Noir really tastes like, and whether it will turn out to suit their taste.

Over time, Pinot Noir tends to have softer tannins and tertiary characters develop. The fruit is less fresh and more dried in character, vegetal aromas (mushroom) often develop, and floral, earthy and undergrowth characters may dominate. Poorly balanced Pinot Noirs may show exaggeration of elements that were not harmonious on release such as oak and alcohol as the fruit fades. Flaws in wine may be exaggerated over time. My personal preference is for young wines that benefit from a year in bottle since this is often the time needed for the wine to recover its personality that was present in barrel.

My experience has been that the overwhelming number of American Pinot Noirs will hold their freshness and age nicely over 2 to 5 years, often with subtle improvement, but beyond this time, although a wine may hold on, it is rare to find one that continues to benefit from further aging. To confirm my impression, I decided to thin out my cellar by pulling out 178 American Pinot Noir wines that were from vintage 2008 or older (a few 2009 wines were reviewed also). I chose 2008 because wines produced in this vintage were usually bottled in 2009 or early 2010 and have now aged in bottle at least 5 years. This exercise proved to be informative and gave me

an excuse to diminish the number of “cellar queens” in my wine locker. My overall impressions are summarized after the wine reviews.

All wines were cellared under pristine conditions. The wines were sent to my wine locker direct from the wineries in most cases and stored at 55°F with ideal humidity and little or no movement over the time of storage. All wines were closed with cork unless otherwise indicated. I did not taste any wines out of magnum, but that would make for an interesting, but unlikely study in the future.

I have divided the wines into the following groups: (1) Highly enjoyable: drink now or mid (3-5 years) to long (5+ years) term, (2) Enjoyable now: drink now or short term (1-2 years), (3) Drinkable, even somewhat enjoyable, but seen better days: drink up, and (4) Decrepitude of old age or flawed: undrinkable. Because of the large number of wines, I have kept the reviews succinct. Remember, a number of these wines were not exceptional when young, and would not be expected to improve simply by cellaring them.


Highly Enjoyable: Drink Now or Mid to Long Term

2007 Alysian Floodgate Vineyard West Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black cherry, graham, sandalwood and sugar cone. Luscious on the palate, with exuberant black cherry, blackberry and boysenberry fruit flavors framed by gentle tannins. Impeccably balanced and thoroughly enjoyable. Still special the following day when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating this wine is built for long term enjoyment. **90**.

2009 Big Basin Vineyards Woodruff Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Unfiltered and unfiltered. Deep aromas of Bing cherry fruit are dominated by toasty oak. Much better integration of oak on the palate, with a smoothly texture, tasty charge of black cherry, blueberry and pomegranate fruits. The mouthfeel is very seductive and the tannins are quite reserved. **91**.

2005 Brogan Cellars Buena Tierra Vineyard Helio Doro Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color with very slight bricking of rim. Tertiary aromas of humid wine cellar, and floral and vegetal notes. Delicious on the palate with an intense charge of fresh well-spiced Bing cherry fruit that attacks with a vengeance and persists through a remarkably long finish. A tertiary vegetal note plays in the background. Impressive roundness and balance. A little alcoholic warmth shows up on the finish. **91**.

2008 Brogan Cellars Buena Tierra Vineyard Helio Doro Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of fresh Bing cherries and baking spices. Soft and elegant on the palate with charming flavors of cherry, spice, cola and nutty oak. Thoroughly enjoyable, but a very slight bit of alcoholic warmth peeks out on the finish. **90**.

 **2008 Calera Jensen Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc.. 16 months 30% new French oak. Unfiltered. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of strawberry, red cherry, red rose and baking spices with a suggestion of whole cluster. Gorgeous fruit that is elegantly presented and framed by lacy tannins. The finish is ridiculously long. Chambolle Musigny in style. **94**.



2009 Clos Pepe Estate Vigneron Select Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, dark red berries and stem. Mid weight plus core of fresh black cherry and boysenberry fruits backed by balanced fine-grain tannins. Richly fruited but balanced, with a remarkably generous finish that goes on and on. **91**.

2008 COBB Emmaline Ann Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of earth-kissed cherry, spice and good funk. Highly enjoyable, with a charge of mid weight plus black cherry and raspberry fruits complimented by toasty oak. Satiny in texture with balanced tannins and a good cut of acidity on the refreshing, cherry fueled finish that shows impressive persistence. **92**.

2006 Et Fille Kalita Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Deeply perfumed with aromas of dark stone fruits and berries, spice and espresso. Ripe and somewhat rich, with flavors of blackberry and cassis accented with mocha java and spice. Well-integrated tannins, admirable harmony, and a fruit-fueled finish that is still fresh. **91**.

2007 Harmonique Delicacé Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderate cherry red color in the glass. Inviting aromas of cherry, spice and sandalwood lead to a mid weight core of fresh red cherry and berry flavors. Sleek on the palate, with good intensity and length, fine-grain tannins, and appealing freshness. **92**.

2007 Harmonique Elegancé Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. An impressive wine with inviting aromas and flavors of cherry and sandalwood. The fruit really grabs hold and lasts through a long finish. Great polish with balanced tannins. The name is well suited. **92**.

2007 Harmonique The Noble One Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of strawberry, cherry, baking spice and sandalwood. Still very fresh, with flavors of well-ripened black cherry and black raspberry in a mid weight style with mild balanced tannins. Quite enjoyable, although a light bit of alcoholic warmth shows up on the finish. **90**.

1999 J. Rochioli Little Hill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass with slight rim bricking. The nose leads with aromas of Bing cherry, herb garden and subtle oak. Lovely core of black cherry, boysenberry and plum fruits, intense on the attack and finish. Subtle riffs of herbs and anise play in the background. A big, bold, Caliesque wine with good structural tannins that is still alive. Tasted blind, you would never guess this is a 16-year-old wine. **92**.

2008 Johan Vineyards Nils Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.8% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass with very slight bricking of rim. Dried rose petal, spice and a touch of barnyard and sweaty saddle (? Brett). Delicious flavors of fresh black cherry, black raspberry, and ripe strawberry, impressive on the mid palate attack and finish. Still sporting firm, dry tannins and complimented by a bit of sweet oak. A real mouthful of fruit that has the structural bones to age further. **90**.

2007 Keller Estate El Coro Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Vibrant aromas of cherry, red rose petal, baking spice and sandalwood. Refined and polished with the delicious essence of fresh cherries and blueberries nicely spiced. Exquisite balance and thoroughly enjoyable. **93**.

2008 Kelley Fox Wines Maresh Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass with very slight rim bricking. The nose changes like a chameleon in the glass, offering various aromas including dark berry jam, rose petal, root vegetables and mint. Inviting elegance and silkiness, with a mid weight core of black cherry and black raspberry fruits encased in suave tannins. A vein of savory herbs runs in the background. Nicely balanced, with a thirst quenching finish. **90**.

2006 Kosta Browne 4-Barrel California Pinot Noir 14.9% alc. 102 cases. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. A perfume to be bottled with scents of ripe dark berries, rose petal and tea leaf. The wine has an mildly aged patina but still has vivid black cherry and black raspberry flavors with a subtle vegetal note. Highly enjoyable with a silky mouthfeel and impeccable balance. **92**

2008 Kendric Vineyards Marin County Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Light cherry red color in the glass. The nose offers appealing aromas of fresh cherry and sandalwood. Highly enjoyable, with a flavorful core of cherry and strawberry fruits clothed in soft tannins and accented with nutty oak. Bright and juicy with a pleasing finish. Impressive balance. **91**.



2006 Laura Volkman Jacob Estate Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Little fruit on the nose, but appealing aromas of tobacco, cigar box and toasty oak. The discreetly concentrated core of sweet cherry, raspberry and purple grape fruits attack with aplomb, finishing with mouthwatering juiciness and length. A bit of tobacco-laced oak lends interest. There are good structural bones still evident which can extend the wine's life, but I would drink up now. **90**.

2004 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Highly aromatic, with scents of blackberry, huckleberry, beet and rose petal. Richly fruited, with flavors of blackberry and spiced plum that are aggressive on the attack, and last through a satisfying finish. Very fresh, with a suave mouthfeel. The wine has enough tannin to age further but is at its apogee now. **92**.

2005 Littorai The Haven Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of crushed dark red berries, seasoned oak and sweet pipe smoke jump from the glass. Highly enjoyable, with a mid weight core of perfectly ripened dark red fruits accented by oak spice. Very modest tannins with good finishing power. Classy now, but will last several more years. **91**.

2006 Littorai Savoy Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting primary and tertiary aromas of cherry, red raspberry, leather and tea leaf. The fruit veers to the redder spectrum and is fresh and vibrant. The tannic backbone should carry this wine through several more years. **93**.

2006 Mount Eden Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass with slight bricking of rim. An array of inviting aromas waif from the glass including black cherry, oak spice, mint, humus and dark rose. Both savory and fruity with flavors of black cherry, blackberry, sweet tobacco, and herbs. A good spark of acidity provides vibrancy and a crisp finish, and balanced, dry tannins provide structure. Oak chimes in with a seasoning touch. This wine could be easily confused with a 1er Cru Burgundy. Tasted twice. **91-93**.

2006 Owen Roe Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Oregon winemaker made this wine from Santa Maria Valley grapes (2 Dijon clones). Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aroma of fresh crushed cherries and marzipan. Highly flavorful, featuring purple and black fruits accented with a touch of nutty oak. Velvety in texture, with balanced tannins to carry the wine even further. **91**.

2005 Paul Lato "Duende" Gold Coast Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Enticing perfume of fresh cherry, strawberry, Asian 5-spice, sage, tobacco and pain grille that holds up over time in the glass. Elegant with supple tannins, featuring black cherry, blackberry, purple grape and huckleberry flavors with oak driven tar and smoke seasoning in the background. Very suave in the mouth. Tasted twice with consistent results. **90**.

2003 Pey-Marin "Trois Filles" Marin County Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Clones 115 and 667. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. This wine was tasted twice with remarkably different results and is quite instructive in that it shows aging Pinot Noir can be hit or miss depending on a number of factors. One wine had

a well-aged character with aromas of prune, dried herbs and marzipan. Fresher fruit flavors show up on the palate with boysenberry and blackberry featured. Muscular, grippy tannins overwhelm what fruit is left. Close to decrepitude. **84**. The second wine had inviting aromas of black cherry and loam upon opening that faded over time. The core of black cherry and black raspberry fruit was still fresh and vibrant and accented with notes of spice, leather, toast and mocha. The tannins were well matched to the mid weight plus fruit and the finish was impressively long. **91**.

2006 Radio-Coteau La Neblina Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely aroma of spiced cherry leads to an intense attack of fresh black cherry and black raspberry fruits that really attracts attention. Highly enjoyable with impeccable balance and a finish that lingers. Impressive for a 9-year-old wine and still has plenty of life ahead. **92**.

2008 Red Car Dreamland Platt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of raspberry, cherry plum and vanilla creme are quite pleasant. Velvety in the mouth, with balanced tannins and some finishing intensity and length. No smoke taint. **90**.

2007 Rhys Vineyards Swan Terrace Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 12.5% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Plenty of whole cluster goodness on the nose with aromas of rose, exotic spice and peppercorn. Soft and smooth on the palate, with a core of herb-infused blackberry, cassis and black plum sauce flavors that are imbued with spice. The tannins are somewhat daunting so that the wine currently lacks suppleness, but otherwise quite impressive. More cellaring may further ameliorate the tannins. **91**.

2002 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderate light burnished cherry color in the glass. Tertiary aromas of worn leather shoe, tobacco and wilted rose arouse interest. Light in weight but highly flavorful with notes of cherry, spice, brewed tea, and anise along with a curious peach note. Very soft tannins, and some finishing strength with quenching acidity. The fruit has definitely thinned out but it has plenty of character. A very interesting aged wine. **93**.

2007 ROCO Private Stash No. 5 Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very welcoming aromas of dark berries with a compliment of oak. Delicious and classy, with a silky array of boysenberry and the blackest cherry fruits seasoned with a touch of oak vanillin and spice. Impeccably balanced, with a generous, ridiculously long finish. **92**.

2006 ROAR Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry sauce, dark chocolate and briar. A bit rugged with a grip of tannin, but offers a charming fruit core of black cherry and dark raspberry with hints of spice and sandalwood. Oak is evident but not intrusive and the wine is still in balance. **90**.

2008 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 31 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. 70% Pommard, 30% Wädenswil from West Hill. 57% new oak. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red rose petal, cherry and toasty oak. Flavorful core of dark strawberry and dark cherry flavors with oak seasoning. Very modest tannins and quite enjoyable now with balance to last several years. **90**.

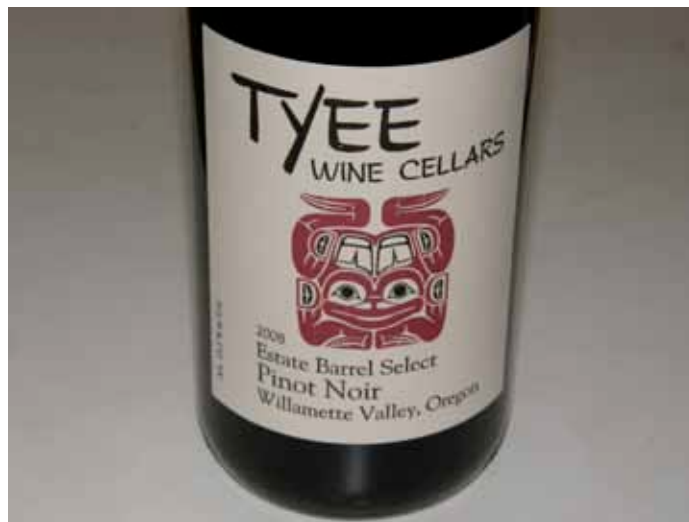
2007 Scherrer "Big Brother" Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose opens slowly in the glass to reveal inviting aromas of black cherry, spice and potpourri. Very suave on the palate, with delicious mid weight plus purple and black fruits with a touch of cola. A superb wine with supple tannins, inviting harmony and a very long finish. A magnum of this wine would probably last 20 years easily. Still great the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **92**.



2007 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Balistreri Vineyard Freestone View Block Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Shy, but pleasing aromas of black raspberry jam and spice, picking up intensity over time in the glass. Delicious plum, cassis and black raspberry flavors with balanced tannins and a touch of smoky oak seasoning. Nicely crafted and maintaining with a generous finish. **91.**



2008 TYEE Wine Cellars Estate Barrel Select Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Very nicely perfumed with fragrant scent of fresh raspberry, cherry and spice. Exquisitely balanced with a delicious core of light to mid weight intense cherry flavor. The wine is bright and uplifting, with suede-like, fine-grain tannins. I have tasted this seductive wine on several occasions and it never fails to impress. I think it is one of Oregon's greatest wines in this vintage. **95.**



2004 WesMar Balletto Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Both fruity and slightly pungent on the nose, with aromas of blackberry, black raspberry, spice and earthy flora. Luscious, juicy and amazingly fresh fruit. Soft and smooth on the palate, with dreamy tannins and a compliment of seasoned oak (cola and anise). **90.**

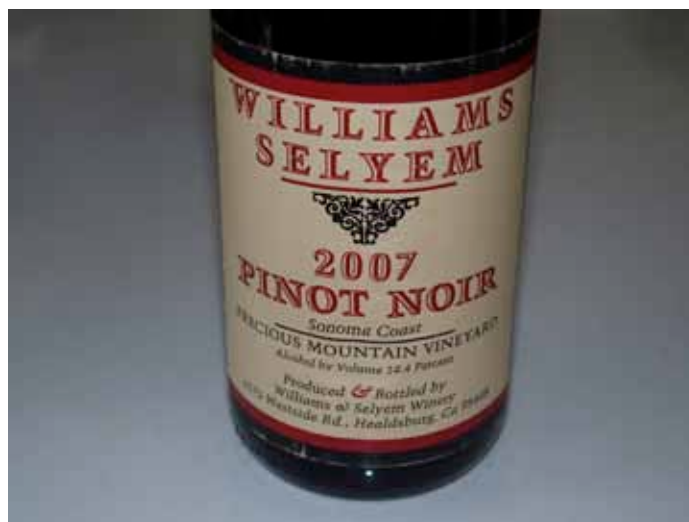
2004 WesMar Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Very complex nose filled with nuance, offering aromas of Bing cherry, cardamom spice, tea, musk, game and smoky oak. Still replete with deep cherry flavor accented with spice. Silky, with supple tannins and a generous kiss of sweet cherry fruit on the bright acid fueled finish. **91.**

2006 Westrey Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Appealing scent of black cherry fruit, sous-bois, and underbrush. Ripe, but not too ripe profile of mid weight black cherry and pomegranate fruits. Well-balanced tannins and acidity, harmonious integration of oak, with impressive intensity and length on the finish. **91**.

2003 W.H. Smith Maritime Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Bright, dark reddish purple color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of blackberry jam, black cherry, leather and brick. Very classy and inviting on the palate, with robust flavors of blackberry and cassis with hints of Asian 5-spice, tea, and cola. Smooth tannins and some finishing persistence. Has held up nicely. Only nit is a bit of alcoholic warmth on the finish. **90**.



2007 Williams Selyem Precious Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is quite complex but challenging to describe, offering more savory and fruity aromas. Exceptional on the palate, with flavors of cherry, spice, cola and black tea, framed by balanced tannins. The wonderful finish hangs on for dear life. The balance will carry this wine for at least 10 more years. **94**.



2008 Winderlea Vineyards & Winery Ana Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Really lovely aromas of black cherry, spice and a hint of espresso. Silky smooth on the palate with a discreetly concentrated and highly flavorful black cherry core of fruit that is underlain with notes of cola and espresso. The fruit is downright luscious. There is a little more oak presence than I like, but this wine is hard to resist. Birds would love these grapes! **92**.

2009 Winderlea Vineyards & Winery Dundee Hills Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Reserved aromas of cherry, berry, forest floor and conifer compost. Mouth filling black cherry and black raspberry fruits that really impress with purpose and generosity. Still very fresh with merged tannins, and a demonstrative finish that speaks of this warm vintage in Oregon. **92**.

2006 Windy Oaks Estate Wood Tank Fermented Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. Light cherry red color in the glass. Well-spiced cherry fruit is featured on the nose with added aromas of wilted rose, spice and green herbs. The mid weight core of cherry fruit is fresh and upbeat, and accented with riffs of brown spice, mocha, and sarsaparilla. The tannins are well integrated, there is a good acid backbone, and revealing length on the finish. A harmonious wine that is still very satisfying. **92**.

2007 Windy Oaks Estate Estate Cuvée Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black raspberry preserves, oak spice, and forest after a rain. Boisterous attack of plum, boysenberry and dark raspberry fruits with added flavors of spice, cola and seasoned oak. Still very fresh, with modest fine-grain tannins and a noticeably generous and high-pitched finish. Tasted twice. **90-91**.

2007 Zepaltas Suacci Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very nice aromatic presence with scents of smoky black cherry, cardamom spice and wilted rose. Smooth, even creamy on the palate with a tasty core of black cherry, raspberry, grilled meat and spice flavors augmented with smoky oak in the background. Very soft tannins. Drinking perfectly now but will hold mid to long term. **92.**

Enjoyable Now: Drink Up or Short Term

2007 Alesia (Rhys) Falstaff Road Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with hi-tone aromas of blackberry, black currant and spice. Rich and bold on the palate featuring sappy dark fruits with impressive finishing persistence. A solid wine with balanced tannins that has held up admirably. **89.**

2006 Antica Terra Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Complex nose, offering aromas of raisin, wilted rose, spice, leather and toasty oak. The mid weight plus core of black cherry and blackberry fruits is encased in smooth tannins and complimentary oak. Definitely on the ripe side but not too ripe. **89.**

2009 Auteur Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Fresh aromas of black cherry, wild raspberry, tobacco and espresso. Richly endowed with sweet, sappy flavors of black cherry, blackberry and pomegranate expanding on the palate and finishing with impressive presence. Modest tannins and a satiny texture make for easy drinking. The oak overlay is a bit daunting and may take over control of this wine over time so drink up soon. **89.**

2000 Beaux Frères The Beaux Frères Vineyard Yamhill County Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, mushroom, spice and vanilla cream. Full-bodied, with fading black cherry fruit flavors. The tannins are still muscular and prominent and there is a subtle sense of alcohol on the finish. **88.**

2002 Beaux Frères The Beaux Frères Vineyard Yamhill County Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruit profile featuring black grapes and cassis aromas with a hint of almond, stem, white chocolate and oak. Mid weight styled with ripe boysenberry, plum, black cherry, black tea, root beer and anise flavors. Noticeable but not imposing tannins with juicy acidity in the background. Holding its own after 13 years. Fans of aged Pinot Noir will enjoy this wine. Tasted twice with consistent results. **89.**

2008 Benovia La Pommeraiie Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of blackberry jam and nutty oak. Lush and long on the palate, with a concentrated core of black raspberry and blackberry fruits that hang on to the finish for what seems an eternity. The tannins are balanced and the texture is seductively creamy. A bit of alcoholic warmth surfaces on the finish. **90.**

2005 Bianchi Garey Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of seasoned oak, cinnamon on toast and BBQ grill. Much better on the palate with flavorful tastes of black raspberry and blackberry fruits accented with baking spices. A riper fruit profile and balanced tannins. Very polished. **89.**

2007 Buena Vista Swan Selection Carneros Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Really nice aromatic presence with scents of black cherry, spice and sweet oak. The mid weight flavors of black cherry, BBQ beef and spice over overshadowed a bit by oak creep. The fruit is still very fresh, the tannins are nicely balanced, and the cherry liquor finish pleases. **88.**

2005 Brogan Cellars Sonoma Coast Reserve Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Moderately dark orange-red color in the glass. Aged perfume of star anise, tobacco leaf, rose petal, spice box and blackberry jam. Plush and richly fruited, with flavors of strawberry, black raspberry and blackberry accented with brown spice. Very soft in the mouth, with good acidity, but lacking fruit on the slightly astringent finish that shows a bit of alcoholic warmth. Drinkable, but fruit tastes a little washed out. **87.**

2008 Brogan Cellars Two Brothers Cuvée Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Funky, even slightly Brett on the nose with added scents of iodine, old cask and raspberry. Aged flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, cola and tobacco. Soft in the mouth with melted tannins and a good acid underbelly. **87.**

2007 Cristom Salud Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately light dark cherry with slight bricking of rim. Whole cluster is evident in the nose that is flush with aromas of wilted rose and spice along with smoky oak. Light to mid weight in style, with oak-infused flavors of cherry and spice and plenty of whole cluster goodness. Bright acidity, good finishing length and enough tannin to carry the wine further. Very distinctive and will not appeal to everyone. **89.**

2000 Dehlinger Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderate cherry red color with a slightly yellow rim. Plenty to like in the nose with aromas of black cherry, Prada leather coat, seasoned oak and grilled vegetables. Rustic and well-aged, with fading fruit, but still very enjoyable. Flavors of cherry, raspberry and sandalwood are framed by lighter tannins and seasoned with a touch of oak. The finish is juicy and quenching. No reason to cellar this wine further. **89.**

2002 Demuth Winery Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 16.0% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Funky nose in a good way with added notes of black cherry and leather boot. Still plenty of fruit pleasure featuring black cherry and blackberry flavors. Very ripe fruited demeanor with a hint of raisin. Notes of anise and baking spice add interest. A curious salinity plays in the background. Balanced and impressive after many years. **90.**

2007 Dubakella Trinity County California Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruited, with aromas of black cherry, Hoison sauce, rose petal and sous-bois, and rich flavors of prune, black currant and blackberry. There are subtle notes of anise, black tea and stout beer as well. Very soft and smooth on the palate with a fruit-driven finish. **87.**

2002 Dutton Goldfield Devil's Gulch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. A bit tired but still glorious offering aromas of black cherry and old trunk and flavors of blackberry, and boysenberry. Approaching senility but still has some pizzazz with firm, matched tannins and some length on the finish. **90.**

2008 Dutton-Goldfield Devil's Gulch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Some blackberry fruit on the nose, but primarily other aromas including oak, cigar box, iron and menthol. A lot of iron-based minerality in this wine which offers a mid weight core of purple and black berry fruits with seasoned oak backing and some tannin bones. **89.**

2004 Elk Prairie Vineyard Estate Humboldt County Pinot Noir 13.0% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Tertiary aromas of mushroom, cedar and woodfern. Still plenty of black raspberry and black cherry fruit to please. A little earthy with persistent tannins that arrive with a rush on the big, fruit-driven finish that really grabs hold. **88.**

2004 Eric Kent Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 15.2% alc.. Moderately dark cherry color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherry pie glaze, baking spices and toasty oak. Intense attack of cherry and rhubarb with a touch of cola and spice accents. Richly extracted, but offering balanced tannins, oak and alcohol. Very Russian River Valley in character. Could last longer due to balance. **90.**

2008 Furthermore Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Giving aromas of ripe berries and cherries, wilted rose and grilled beef. Still flush with boysenberry and blackberry fruits seasoned with anise-laced oak. Very modest tannins and a charming texture. Fruit-driven, with little nuance, but nicely balanced. **87.**

2004 George Hirsch Vineyards Block 3A Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc.. Moderately dark brownish red color in the glass. Aromas of leather, allspice and oak. Well-aged in character, with flavors of dried cherry, brown sugar, grilled peach and roasted nuts, supported by supple tannins. Still has some charm, but fading. **88.**

2005 George Nuptial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Delicate aromas of cherry, dried rose petal, spice, camphor and cedary oak. Light to mid weight

flavors of cherry, cranberry, rose hips tea and dried herbs. The bright acidity leads to a juicy character and an uplifting cherry fueled finish. **89**.

2007 Grey Stack The Fisherman Connell Family Vineyard Bennett Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Oak (black tea, anise, tar) has assumed control of this wine but it does offer some juicy strawberry, cherry and cranberry fruit flavors that are uplifted by a good spark of acidity. **87**.

2006 Gypsy Canyon Santa Rita Creek Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Very enjoyable perfume out of the gate with scents of dried cherry, dried herbs, rose petal and smoky oak. Inviting elegance and texture, with a mid weight core of cherry, cranberry and raspberry flavors accented with baking spice and mushroom. Fruit has some power and persistence. **89**.

2008 Haden Fig Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. A very nice wine that is drinking now at its apogee, with aromas of cherry, sous-bois and sweet oak, and flavors of ripe cherry, red raspberry and red plum. The tannins are relatively firm but not intrusive and there is a bright, very satisfying, cherry fueled finish. **90**.

2006 Hug Cellars Cedar Lane Vineyard Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Upon pouring, the aromas of strawberry and sandalwood are appealing, but over time in the glass the fruit fades to reveal aromas of forest floor, stem, tapioca and sweet oak. More pleasurable on the palate, with flavors of strawberry, raspberry and dark cherry accented with baking spices including clove. Soft tannins and juicy acidity with some finishing length. Tasted twice: **88-89**.

2002 J. Rochioli Three Corner Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Highly enjoyable, with many nuances. Aromas of darker cherry and berries, crushed rose petal and a hint of vanilla. Luscious core of black cherry and black raspberry flavors with accents of dried herbs and vanilla. Very mild tannins. **90**.



2007 J Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Light reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting perfume of red cherry, sous-bois and baking spices. Still fresh and flavorful featuring a deep black cherry essence and a compliment of oak vanillin. A firm tannic backbone balances the fruit and the wine finishes bright and pleasurable. Impressive for an 8-year-old AVA Pinot Noir. **90**.

2006 Jim Ball Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Enjoyable aromas of black cherry, spice, brioche and toasty oak. Modest in extraction, but very flavorful, featuring the essence of ripened black cherry fruit accented with notes of tea and anise. There is a firm tannic backbone carrying the wine along. **90**.

2008 Keefer Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate cherry red color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of ripe cherry, raspberry and ripe plum with plenty of tobacco-infused oak. Very soft tannins with a tart cherry finish. **88**.

2007 Kelley Fox Wines Momtazi Vineyard McMinnville Pinot Noir 13.0% alc.. Screwcap. Light cherry red color in the glass. Not much on the nose with demure aromas of red berries, old book, and pharmaceutical cabinet. Light to mid weight red cherry fruit is accented with hints of iodine and oak and uplifted by bright acidity. Much too shy and austere with a slightly astringent finish. **86.**

2009 Kendric Vineyards Marin County Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Light crimson color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of candied cherry, rose petal, and marzipan. Light to mid weight in style with pleasingly juicy flavors of ripe black cherry, plum and raspberry with an underpinning of nutty oak. The tannins are quite malleable and fine-grain making for easy drinking. **90.**

2005 Kosta Browne Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 15.0% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry, marzipan and seasoned oak rise from the glass. Mid weight plus array of ripe stone and berry fruits with balanced tannins and oak treatment. Still enjoyable, with alcohol well submerged. **89.**

2006 Laura Volkman Vineyards St. James Reserve Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Nice marriage of black cherry fruit and oak on the nose. Mid weight plus flavors of black cherry and black raspberry and spice in a luxurious style with soft tannins and a full finish. I get the impression that this was better in past but still has some brightness of fruit and is very enjoyable. **90.**

2006 Laura Volkman Vineyards Rachel Estate Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Highly perfumed with a plethora of dark stone fruits complimented by a touch of oak. The mid weight core of sweet, spiced black cherry fruit really sings with extravagant length on the finish. There is still plenty of tannin to carry the wine further. **89.**

2004 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Uplifting aromas of strawberry, exotic spices and incense. Structurally sound, with a mid weight core of plum and dark berry flavors with a noticeable oak overlay. The mouthfeel is seductively smooth. The wine is less appealing over time in the glass, indicating it has no where to go. **89.**

2002 Marcassin Three Sisters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Brooding aromas of black currant, wine cave and roasted almond. Very ripe, even slightly roasted purple and black fruits lead to a long, sweet maraschino cherry finish that leaves a bit of alcoholic heat in its wake. **88.**

1998 Mueller Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate brick red in color with slight yellowing of rim. Aromas of cherry, root beer, spice, ivy and green garden. Quite enjoyable still, with a mid weight charge of black cherry and blood orange fruits supported by residual tannins. A touch of tobacco and BBQ sauce adds interest. Smoothly textured with a good cut of acidity on finish. **90.**



2008 Papapietro Perry Pommard Clones Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Aromas of black cherry, stem, bacon fat and chimney. Interesting flavors of spiced cherry, red plum and grilled beef framed by modest tannins and supportive acidity, finishing with cherry goodness. **89.**

2005 Pey-Marin "Trois Filles" Marin County Pinot Noir Dijon 115, 667 and 777. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Woodsy, dark fruit perfume leads to a juicy wine featuring cherry and red berry flavors underlain with notes of spice, underbrush, and herbs. Good entry, attack and finish that offers a generous amount of oak but there is enough fruit to stand up to it. **88.**

2007 Phillips Hill Toulouse Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of cherry, berry and underbrush. Enjoyable mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and spice with good grip and fruit expression on the finish. Nicely balanced tannins and a welcome touch of oak in the background. **90.**

2005 Radio-Coteau La Neblina Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. The nose is quite appealing upon opening with bright aromas of black cherry and rose petal, but oak intervenes over time in the glass. A cherry-themed wine with a green thread and some tarry oak in the background. Very suave and polished. **88.**

2006 Radio-Coteau Alberigi Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Pleasant scent of blackberry sauce with a compliment of oak. Mid plus core of black cherry, plum and cola flavors with oak in the background. Impressive freshness, with an intensely fruity finish driven by cherry goodness and accompanied by a rush of grippy tannins. **89.**

2008 Red Car Wine Co. Heaven & Earth Bohème Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry blossom, whiskey barrel, rose petal and oak. The juicy black cherry fruit has a slightly woody overtone with an added flavor of beef jerky. There are soft, balanced tannins and some intensity on the cherry fueled finish. **88.**

2006 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is replete with aromas of cherry, earthy flora and aromatic herbs. Fresh and alive and very herbal with a good attack of cherry fruit augmented with notes of root beer and vanilla. Nice harmony with balanced tannins and a pleasing finish filled with sweet fruit. **89.**

2002 Roessler Clos Pepe Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, strawberry, walnut, toast and cigar box lead to a mid weight fanciful core of cherry and cranberry fruits. Still structurally sound with some persistence of the sweet cherry finish. **88.**

2002 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 32 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose leads with aromas of blackberry, spice, leather and tobacco leaf. Still alive and pleasurable, with plenty of spiced dark fruits that saturate the mid palate and persist on the finish. The wine fades a bit over time in the glass so drink up. **90.**

2003 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 32 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Part of original planting of Shea Vineyard. Wädenswil clone. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of earth-kissed purple and black fruits with a hint of baking spices including vanilla. Bold and luscious with a generous core of dried dark fruits framed by well-structured tannins. A riff of nutty oak plays in the background. Some finish, but not as fruity and drier than the 2002 version of this wine. A sense of alcoholic warmth shows up on the finish. **89.**

2008 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 7 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. An array of dark stone and berry fruits reach out from the glass. Full-bodied, with an impressive sweet core of darker fruits framed by aggressive tannins. Well-integrated oak and a refreshing finish. More time in the cellar may benefit this wine but it will always be a tannic, brute of a wine. **87.**

2008 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 5 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Clone 777 from East Hill. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is closed even when checked the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Mid weight flavors of black cherry and black raspberry with an herbal streak. Ripe fruit is balanced by chewy tannins. **88.**

2002 Sine Qua Non Hollerin' M Oregon Pinot Noir 15.4% alc.. Shea Vineyard. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of very ripe black cherry and black raspberry with notes of spice, rose petal and oak. Full-bodied core of darker berries, plum and pomegranate with a hint of anise and tarry oak. The texture is seductively soft and silky. Oak shows up over time in the glass. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the fruit had a cooked tone with a note of beet root and oak-driven tobacco. The wine was most enjoyable when first poured. Drink up. **87.**

2004 Sine Qua Non Covert Fingers California Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. A bold, ripely fruited wine featuring blackberry and boysenberry flavors that are somewhat cooked. Accents of spice, vanilla and dark chocolate contribute interest. A wine styled like Syrah that may appeal to fruit hedonists. **87.**

2004 Sinor-LaVallee Talley-Rincon Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Rather subdued nose that slowly gives up its charms in the glass to reveal aromas of dark stone and berry fruits, dark chocolate and earth. Still seems tight and burly on the palate, with flavors of black plum, cassis, almond and toast. Still sports muscular tannins. A streak of citrus plays in the background. **88.**

2004 Sinor-LaVallee Anniversary Cuvée Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Pleasing tertiary aromas of wilted rose, tea leaves, hay bale and iron. Impressive entry and mid palate attack of plush boysenberry and black plum fruits framed by bold tannins which arrive with a rush on the finish. **89.**

2008 Thirty-Seven Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Slightly smoky with a mid weight core of black cherry fruit. Good attack, intensity and flavorful finish with added notes of cola and cinnamon spice. Slight alcoholic warmth on the finish. This wine is slightly smoke tainted but still enjoyable. **87.**

2007 Verve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Klein Vineyard. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aroma of dried cherry. Very flavorful mid weight cherry core with a slight vegetal thread in the background. Some, but not intrusive tannins and welcome length on the cherry driven finish. **89.**

2005 WesMar Vintner's Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Complex nose offering scents of cherry, raisin, marzipan, forest floor, spearmint and iron. Still has plenty of enjoyable black cherry fruit with the added flavor of red licorice. Bright acidity, soft tannins and a modestly long finish. **89.**

2007 Westrey Oracle Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Moderately dark cherry color in the glass. Nuanced and inviting, this wine offers aromas of cherry, raspberry, sous-bois, marzipan and dried herbs. Light to mid weight in extraction, with flavors of black cherry and black raspberry that seem to be fading. A bit of oak spice adds interest. Nicely balanced, with soft tannins and a creamy finish. **89.**

2008 Wild Horse Cheval Savage Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with hi-tone aromas of black cherry and spicy oak. Soft and smooth on the palate with a vibrant mix of mid weight black cherry and black raspberry flavors. Plenty of oak overlay tends to drown out the appealing fruit. **89.**

2003 W.H. Smith Maritime Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of very ripe berries, oak dust and underbrush. Mid weight plus core of sweet purple and black berry fruits with oak in the background. Soft tannins and some finishing intensity. Tasted twice. **89.**

2007 Zepaltas La Cruz Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. The nose leads with scents of cherry, baking spice and sandalwood. Elegantly style and soft on the palate with a pleasing core of red cherry fruit seasoned with spice and oak. Charming, with supple tannins. **90.**



2007 Zepaltas W.E. Bottoms Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose, even with swirling is rather drab with only hints of cherry and rose petal. Much more giving on the palate, with an intense attack of plum and black raspberry fruits. Very charming with gentle tannins, structural integrity and a hint of oak. Still fresh with a sweet edge to the very ripe fruit. **89.**

Drinkable, Even Somewhat Enjoyable, But Seen Better Days: Drink Up

2006 Alesia (Rhys) Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very shy aromas of cherry, raspberry and sandalwood. Enjoyable mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, cola and tar backed by residual tannins. A sweet cherry and blueberry driven finish shows good life. **87.**

2006 Alesia (Rhys) Chileno Valley Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, wilted rose and sweet tobacco reminding of whole cluster. The mid weight core of cherry fruit is a bit dried out and faded. There is a good cut of acidity and slightly astringent tannins that along with the oak, surface on the finish. **86.**

2007 Alesia (Rhys) Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The scent of ripe grapes, black cherry and spice lead to a mid weight plus styled wine filled with black raspberry black cherry and brown spice flavors. Still sporting some tannins, a bit heavy with oak vanillin, and lacks the tension usually found in Green Valley Pinot Noir. **87.**

2006 Aston Estate Clone 777 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. Dark ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and tobacco smoke. Creamy on the palate with a linear array of dark berry and stone fruits. Beefy and clumsy, with noticeable oak-driven licorice flavor. Lip burn due to alcoholic heat on the finish builds in intensity over time. **84.**

2005 Aubert Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 15.6% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, iodine, old leather, oak char with some volatile acidity. Very ripe mix of cherry and berry fruits with balanced tannins and a bit of alcoholic heat on the finish. **85.**

2005 Aubert UV Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 15.8% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry reduction sauce, vanilla and tar. Extravagantly endowed with black grape, black raspberry and black cherry fruits with an underpinning of earth, dark chocolate and toasty oak. The tannins are soft and gracious, and the texture is smooth. The wine finishes with mild lip burn due to alcoholic heat. **87.**

2007 Aubert Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 15.6% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Fruit aromas of blackberry jam and cassis are overlaid by a good dose of sweet oak. Syrah-like in fruit heft with loads of concentrated, ripe dark fruits, a noticeable oak overlay, and major tannins. Not my thing as there is little to link this wine to Pinot Noir and would score better as a Syrah. **85.**

1998 Beaux Frères The Beaux Frères Vineyard Yamhill County Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass - color holding nicely. A bit funky and rustic on the nose, offering scents of red fruit leather, menthol, spearmint and charcoal. Better on the palate, with a generous attack of dark red berry and cherry flavors. Still enjoyable with good acidity, firm tannins, and a quenching, crisp finish. The wine fades quickly in the glass so drink up. **87.**

1999 Beaux Frères The Beaux Frères Vineyard Yamhill County Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The main aroma is blackberry jam with a slight pharmaceutical note. Middleweight essence of purple berries with balanced tannins and some finishing length. A thread of oak runs in the background and a hint of alcoholic warmth shows up on the finish. **89.**

2006 Brogan Cellars Russian River Valley Reserve Pinot Noir 15.1% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass with slight bricking of the rim. The nose is pleasant but not distinctive featuring ripe fruits, fig and oak scents. Mid weight in style with sweet, very ripe fruit flavors and added notes of fig and root beer. Soft in the mouth with supple tannins. A little alcoholic warmth creeps into the finish. **87.**

2003 Burrell School Veranda Vineyard Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. 50% new oak. Light red color in the glass. Red cherry and oak aromas share equally on the nose. The herbal cherry and raspberry fruit is beginning to fade, and alcohol and a heavy lean of oak is surfacing. Bright acidity and modest tannins are benefitting this wine at this stage. **87.**

2008 Campesino Los Carneros Napa Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose lacks fruit, offering only aromas of green bean and oak. Some flavorful black cherry and black raspberry fruit peeks out from under the oak overlay. The fine-grain tannins are balanced and there is some finishing power. **86.**

2005 Cima Collina Chula Viña Monterey County Pinot Noir 13.85% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Enjoyable aromas of black cherry reduction sauce, marzipan, leather and brier. Ripely fruited with flavors of blueberry, black plum sauce and black cherry. Still quite tannic. **87.**

2006 Cima Collina Tondre Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple with slight bricking of the rim. Demure aromas of earthy flora, black cherry, cola, pipe smoke and oak. More enjoyable on the palate with the essence of sweet black raspberry fruit accented with exotic spice and underlain with modest tannins. Tends to fade over time in the glass. **85.**

2002 Clos De La Tech San Francisco Bay Pinot Noir 13.0% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of dried herbs and mint lead to a charge of black cherry fruit that finishes with extravagant generosity and persistence. A good cut of acidity pervades in the background, but the wine lacks balance, due to grippy tannins that intrude. **88.**

2005 Domaine Drouhin Oregon Louise Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of worn leather, smoky oak and black tea. A linear charge of mid weight plus well-oaked purple and black fruits seems a bit bulky, rustic and flat. The fruit is a bit dried out. Smooth on the palate, with good balanced and bright acidity on the finish. **87.**

2008 Donum West Slope Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Ripe fruit is featured on the nose with some volatile acidity. Big boned and plush with plenty of blackberry and black currant fruits and a bit of raisin. A linear, sweet-fruited wine with a generous fruit-driven finish. Disappointing and may be an off bottle. Less interesting over time in the glass. **85.**

2008 Donum Thomas Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Honoring the 100th birthday of grower Thomas Ferguson. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of toasty oak and campfire. Luscious core of black cherry, black raspberry and black currant fruits with plenty of nutty oak overlay and firm, prominent tannins. The fruit has purpose and hands on through a long finish. **88.**

2005 Eric Kent Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of cherry pie glaze, spice, and vanilla in this fruit and oak dominated wine. The tannins have melted, and the sweet and sour cherry finish exhibits a slight bit of alcoholic warmth. **85.**

2007 Et Fille Maresh Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.9% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The aromas of black cherry and toasty oak lead to a fruit-driven wine offering a discreetly concentrated core of black cherry and blackberry fruits framed by silky tannins. Rather linear, and seems to be starting to fade. **87.**

2001 Etude Heirloom Carneros Napa Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very shy nose featuring savory aromas of underbrush, wilted rose and dried herbs. The robust core of black fruits has a vegetal underpinning and is framed by muscular tannins. Very rustic. **86.**

2003 Etude Heirloom Carneros Napa Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose lacks fruit, offering only aromas of toasty oak, nuts and sous-bois. Full bodied and plush on the palate with flavors of cassis, and sweetened blackberry. Still fresh, with balanced tannins and a smooth mouthfeel, finishing with a modest rush of astringent tannins. **88.**

2008 Furthermore La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers aromas of green herbs, stem and nutty oak. Considerably more fruity on the palate, featuring a mid weight offering of boysenberry and blackberry fruits accented with savory herbs and oak-driven toast and vanilla. The fruit-driven finish is sweet and modest. **87.**

2005 Gypsy Canyon Lot 8 Santa Rita Creek Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. Moderately light red color in the glass with a slight orange tinge to the rim. The nose offers tertiary aromas of hickory, earthy flora and leather. Well-aged flavors of fig, prune, dried cherry and black currant, framed by soft, dry tannins. Good brightness at this age due to a lively cut of acidity. **89.**



2003 J. Rochioli Little Hill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. A bit dried out, with aromas and flavors of dried herbs, hay, tarry oak and black cherry. Soft tannins with a dry, slightly astringent finish. **87.**

2007 Kastania Jaden & Keira's Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers little fruit, only scents of geranium and green herbs. Better on the palate, with a mid weight charge of ripe black cherry, raspberry and plum fruits accented with a slug of oak in the background. Tannins are still holding court on this tired wine. **85.**

2003 Ken Brown Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers scents of mushroom, musty trunk, leather and espresso. Still retaining some nicely flavored blueberry and black cherry fruits. A hint of spice and dark chocolate adds interest. Well balanced tannins. Oak shows up more over time in the glass. **87.**

2006 Kistler Cuvée Elizabeth Bodega Headlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very demure aroma of dark berries. Fruit-driven and rather one-dimensional, featuring blackberry and plum reduction sauce flavors framed by firm tannins, finishing with a kick of citrus-kissed dark berries. **86.**

2009 Kokomo Windsor Oaks Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The aromatic profile is strange, featuring cherry, tobacco and dried rose initially but quickly becoming vegetal. The Bing cherry fruit is dried out and sweet and has an underlying citrus tone. The tannins are reserved and the finish is short. **85.**

2006 L'Angevin Sonoma Stage Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 15.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is closed, even with vigorous swirling, offering delicate aromas of dark berry jam and wilted rose. The mid weight core of ripened blackberry and boysenberry fruits is overwhelmed by a smoky, toasty oak overlay. The fruit has charm, there is some length on the finish and the alcohol is well tucked in. **87.**

2003 Littorai Mays Canyon Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of old book and herb garden. Very ripe fruits are featured, including flavors of sappy black raspberry, blackberry and pomegranate, overwhelmed by grippy tannins. Drink up as this will always be a tannic wine. **86.**

2004 Littorai Mays Canyon Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cooked cherry, old book and redwood bark. More fruity on the palate, with flavors of black cherry and blackberry. Soft in the mouth, with modest length, juicy acidity, and an astringent finish. Somewhat fruit driven and linear. **85.**

2005 Littorai Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry reduction sauce, marzipan, and seasoned oak are inviting initially, but oak takes over in time and the nose becomes rather unpleasant. Better on the palate, with mid weight flavors of black cherry, clove, black tea and green vegetables. Soft in the mouth with supple tannins and a modest finish. Fading. **85.**

2003 Lost Canyon Dutton-Morelli Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose lacks fruit aromas, but offers tertiary scents of wilted flower, old wood and sous-bois. Flavors of blackberry liquor, dark chocolate and savory herbs are buffered by muscular tannins. **85.**

2005 Lost Canyon Dutton-Morelli Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is fruitless, offering scents of oak-driven tobacco, toast and spice, and rose petal. The mid weight charge of black cherry and pomegranate fruit is still alive and there is some charm in the sweet cherry finish. There are riffs of cola and iodine noted, and the oak overlay is quite prominent as the fruit has faded a bit over time. **86.**

2007 Lost Canyon Dutton-Morelli Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is somewhat musty, with aromas of marzipan, mushroom, nuts and vanilla. Aged in flavor profile with tastes of Bing cherry reduction sauce, raisin and brandy, finishing with some alcoholic warmth. **85.**

2002 Melville High Density Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. No fruit is forthcoming on the nose which offers aromas of leather, oak and vanilla cream. A big wine with a load of ripe, black raspberry and blackberry fruits clothed in polished tannins and overlain with plenty of oak enhancement. Lacks acidic verve and exhibits a bit of alcoholic warmth on the finish. **86.**

2002 Melville Carrie's Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 15.1% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. This is a huge Pinot that is more like Syrah in character with copious amounts of black fruits and substantial tannins. Lacks nuance and interest beyond being highly fruity. A bit of alcoholic warmth shows up over time in the glass as the wine warms up. **85.**

2005 Merry Edwards Olivet Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Light cherry red color in the glass. Dark stone fruits are featured with tertiary aromas and flavors of bramble, leaf, dried flowers, and dirty boot. Light to mid weight in extraction, with noticeable oak overlay finishing with juicy acidity. **88.**

2006 Morlet Family Vineyards Joli Coeur Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruited on the nose and palate. Aromas of prune and fermentation volatile elements. Plenty of blackberry, blueberry and cassis fruit is framed by mild tannins in a softly textured style. This wine speaks of very ripe, sweet fruit and nothing else. **84.**

2003 Pey-Marin “Trois Filles” Marin County Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Clones 115 and 667. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. This wine has a well-aged character with aromas of prune, dried herbs and marzipan. Fresher fruit flavors show up on the palate with boysenberry and blackberry featured. Muscular, grippy tannins overwhelm what fruit is left. Close to decrepitude. **84.**

2005 Red Car Wine Co. Amour Fou Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark berries that are cooked in character with hints of brioche and vanilla. Very ripe, sweet cherry and berry fruits are offered in a mid weight style. Still sporting noticeably firm tannins, and not terribly appealing. **85.**

2006 Red Car Wine Co. The Aphorist Bartolomei Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Tertiary scents of green bean and floral bouquet accent the fruit aromas of red cherry, red licorice and tutti-fruity. Very floral on the palate, featuring cherry and dark raspberry flavors backed by mild tannins, finishing short. Tasted twice. **87.**

2007 Road 31 Wine Co. Napa Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers scents of mesquite, oak, and rubber with no fruit. The mid weight plus core of oak-infused purple and black fruits is rather full and linear and beginning to fade. The wine really has little to give at this stage. **84.**

2003 Shea Wine Cellars Block 23 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Tertiary aromas of earthy flora, eucalyptus and green olive. The mid weight core of plum and boysenberry fruit is tasty but has slightly faded. An herbal vein runs in the background, and there is still prominent tannins. **87.**

2003 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Homer Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. Dijon 115 and Wädenswil clones that were never irrigated. A selection of the finest barrels in cellar. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of rose petal and cherry lead to a full-bodied core of purple fruits backed by imposing tannins. The fruit has good freshness, but is rather monotone and the finish is both short and a little hot. **87.**

2004 St. Innocent Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.. 41% new oak. Moderately dark burnished Burgundy color in the glass. No fruit is forthcoming on the nose that offers woody, earthy and marzipan aromas. Definitely shows its age with fading, somewhat dried cherry fruit. The tannins are imposing, and the wine is not particularly enjoyable to drink. **84.**

2005 St. Innocent Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. 42% new oak. Dark reddish purple color in the glass with very slight bricking of rim. Enticing aromas of black cherry, baking spice and toast. Rich and vibrant, offering a charge of very ripe cherry and black raspberry fruits. Some tannin shows up on the slightly astringent finish as does a hint of alcoholic warmth. **87.**

2007 Verve Monterey Old Vines Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose leads with aromas of black cherry, toasty oak and vanilla. The cherry, raspberry and sassafras flavors are rustic and tired but have some charm and a little length. Tannins are still evident. **86.**

2006 WesMar Oehlman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Fruity aromas of strawberry and cherry with a floral wilted rose contribution and a noteworthy pungent note. Soft in the mouth with gossamer tannins, offering shallow red berry and cherry fruit flavors with a hint of sarsaparilla and stem. A bit of alcoholic warmth shows up on the finish which is short. Tasted twice. **86.**

2003 Wild Hog Saralee’s Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 16.4% alc.. Moderately light mahogany with some rim bricking. The nose is quite vegetal with hints of vanilla and sarsaparilla. Full-bodied, with a charge of roasted plum and cherry cola flavor that is assertive. Slightly port-like in character with very soft tannins. Despite the ripeness, the wine has some charm and the alcohol remains integrated. Hanging on. **86.**

1995 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color with slight bricking of the rim. Shy aromas of earth, dried herbs and manure (in a good way). A well-aged wine that is still enjoyable with flavors of sweet black cherry and prominent savory dried herbs. Good vibrancy, finishing with dried fruit and oak flavors. **88.**

2006 Willamette Valley Vineyards Estate Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately light cherry color in the glass. The black cherry fruit tends to be submerged by the oak overlay in this wine. A bit of raspberry fruit and cola flavor show up along with plenty of toasty oak. The tannins are very soft, and there is some finishing length. **86.**

2007 Zepaltas Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of dried cherries, sous-bois and herbs holds up over time in the glass. Still pretty fresh with flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and oak spice with a soft mouthfeel and a crisp finish. Turns lean and more herbal over time in the glass so drink up. **88.**

Decrepitude of Old Age or Flawed: Undrinkable

2008 Bjornstad Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, oak and smoke. Nicely crafted and silky on the palate, but infused with ash and creosote flavors that sadly make the wine undrinkable.

2004 Casa Barranca Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of composted earth, roasted nuts, marzipan and vanilla. The plush core of dark fruits has a roasted quality that combined with a heavy infusion of coffee flavor infusion makes the wine unpleasant to drink.

2008 COBB Diane Cobb: Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.7% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, spice and dark red rose petal fade in the glass over time. Very smoky on the palate with the flavor of creosote intruding. Otherwise fine with balanced tannins and good acidity, but definitely smoke-tainted. **87.**

2006 Eric Kent Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Unpleasant aromas of port, roasted fruit, root vegetables and volatile fermentation aromas. Full-bodied with a charge of sweet very ripe, prune-like fruit. Very cloying and hard to drink. A second bottle offered cooked fruit, medicinal aromas and apparent Brettanomyces. Very flat and flabby.

2006 Hanzell Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir 15.3% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is replete with off odors including celery stalk, green bean, medicine cabinet and Brettanomyces. Modestly weighted cherry and cranberry fruit which has an advanced aged character, set off by aggressive tannins. The wine finishes with a bit of alcoholic heat.

2006 Heart & Hands Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 12.6% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The scent of black cherry syrup, spice, leather and coal leads to an acid-driven palate of cherry and cranberry fruits and a vitamin note. Somewhat shrill, with a tart cherry finish. Pleasurable flavors dissipate over a short time in the glass.

2008 Kanzler Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very ripely fruited featuring a lush array of black stone and berry fruits. There is a heavy overlay of ash and smoke. A linear fruit bomb that is heavily smoke tainted.

2004 L'Angevin Sonoma Stage Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 15.1% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color. Aromas of black cherry syrup, geranium and sweaty saddle (Brett). Soft and plush on the palate but so infused with charred oak and daunting tannin that it is undrinkable. Tasted twice.

1994 Lane Tanner Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir Table wine. Moderate reddish purple color with some rim bricking. The nose is attractive upon pouring with aromas of black cherry, leather, brewed tea and underbrush, but quickly veers to a grassy and trashy scent. Better on the palate, with fleeting flavors of cherry, red berry, spice, iodine and toasty oak, wrapped in soft tannins and a spark of juicy acidity. A grand 20-year-old Pinot Noir that fades pretty fast in the glass.

2002 Lost Canyon Saralee's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Funky nose offering scents of celery, grilled mushroom and bell pepper. Very soft and smooth on the palate with fading cherry fruit that dissipates over time in the glass.

2006 Orogeny Redding Ranch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Dark reddish purple with slight yellowing of the rim. Aromas of port, prune and raisin. Off putting overripe fruit flavors. Flabby and decrepit.

2002 Red Car Wine Co. Amour Fou Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass with slight bricking of rim. Aromas of pipe smoke, fireplace, iron, underbrush and volatile fermentation elements. Upon pouring, there is some briefly tasty black cherry, cassis, cola, smoky oak and spice flavors but the wine fades very quickly in the glass.

2003 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 23 Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc.. Corked, undrinkable.

2007 St. Innocent Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cassis, sludge, veggie bowl and oak. The wine is way out of balance with a rich load of black fruits, a prominent oak overlay and grippy tannins that really stick out. You would never identify this as Pinot Noir tasted blind.

2002 Truckee River Winery Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.7% alc.. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderately light reddish purple color with slight bricking of rim. The nose is quite vegetal with no fruit evident. Drinkable, but barely, with faded fruit flavors of black cherry and boysenberry, backed by a muscular tug of tannin.

2004 WesMar Olivet Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very pungent nose smelling of floral bouquet, pine and shellac. Better on the palate but still strange with mid weight flavors of black cherry and black raspberry with a floral overtone. Off bottle.

Impressions:

- (1) About 25% of the wines aged 5 or more years were still drinking exceptionally well and should age through the mid to long term.
- (2) About 35% of the wines aged 5 or more years were still enjoyable but should be drunk in the short term.
- (3) About 30% of the wines aged 5 or more years were drinkable or even enjoyable but should be drunk up.
- (4) About 10% of the wines suffered decrepitude or were flawed. Surprisingly, only 1 wine out of 175 was clearly corked, although other issues with some wines were undoubtedly cork related.
- (5) There more far more disappointments than epiphanies in aged American Pinot Noir. Aged Pinot Noir can be exhilarating but the rewards are far and few between. You have to work hard for your money to find them. Some producers are known for producing age worthy Pinot Noir: Littorai, Rochioli, Hanzell, Calera and Mount Eden Vineyard but this will vary with vintage and bottling.
- (6) Some aged Pinot Noirs can startle when first opened, but they fade over time and do not provide a special drinking experience over the course of a meal.
- (7) If a Pinot Noir is heavy on tannin, oak or alcohol, they often don't fare well over time as these components become exaggerated as the fruit fades. Alcohol in particular tends to peek out more as wine ages and the fruit and tannins fade.
- (8) Oak creep is evident in a number of Pinot Noir wines over time: it tends to become more apparent in many wines.
- (9) There can be more nuances and interesting tertiary characters to be found in aged Pinot Noir, many of which can challenge the taster to use proper descriptors.
- (10) Vintage differences tend to show up more over time and it is helpful to know the vintage to understand the wine.

(11) If a Pinot Noir is opened on day one, and re-tasted on day two or three, and shows improvement or more expression as well as lasting power, this can be a valuable clue that the wine has someplace to go and will age well.

(11) 2007 in California and 2008 in Oregon seem to be very age worthy vintages.

(12) Most of the preferred aged Pinot Noirs tasted were from vintages 2006, 2007 and 2008 (had aged 5-7 years in bottle).

Conclusion:

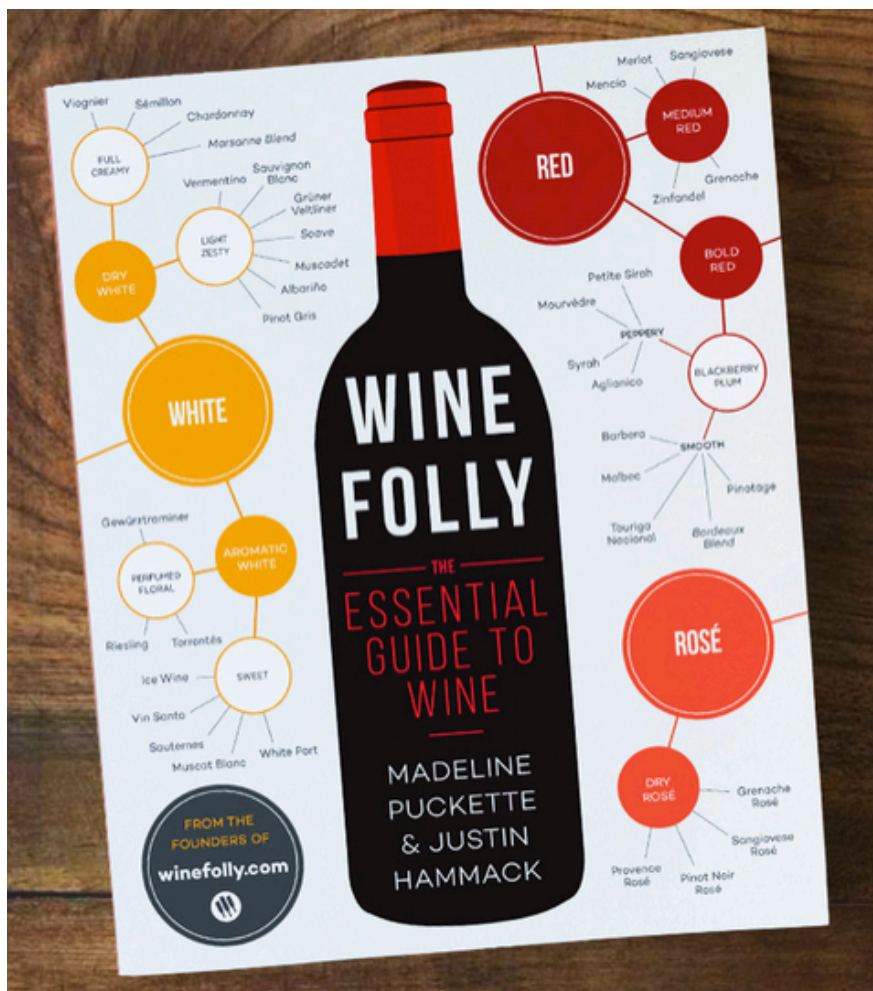
Most domestic Pinot Noirs that are aged five or more years are frequently drinkable, even enjoyable, but not as tantalizing as those wines that are less than five years of age. That said, it is the taster's palate that will confirm or dispute this generalization, as some domestic Pinot Noir drinkers will undoubtedly prefer the nuances and characters that accompany well-aged Pinot Noir. Personally, with very few exceptions, I would not buy domestic Pinot Noir that I did not expect to consume within five to seven years at the most.

Far better to drink a Pinot Noir "too soon" than too late.

New Book Releases

Wine Folly: The Essential Guide to Wine

Madeline Puckette & Justin Hammack



Those wine enthusiasts who follow the award-winning educational website, www.winefolly.com, will find this book highly enjoyable, for it brings together some of the information provided on that website in one, handy reference book. Although this practical book will appeal most to novices since it simplifies the often confusing and daunting complexities of wine, the book can be a valuable reference source for experienced wine drinkers.

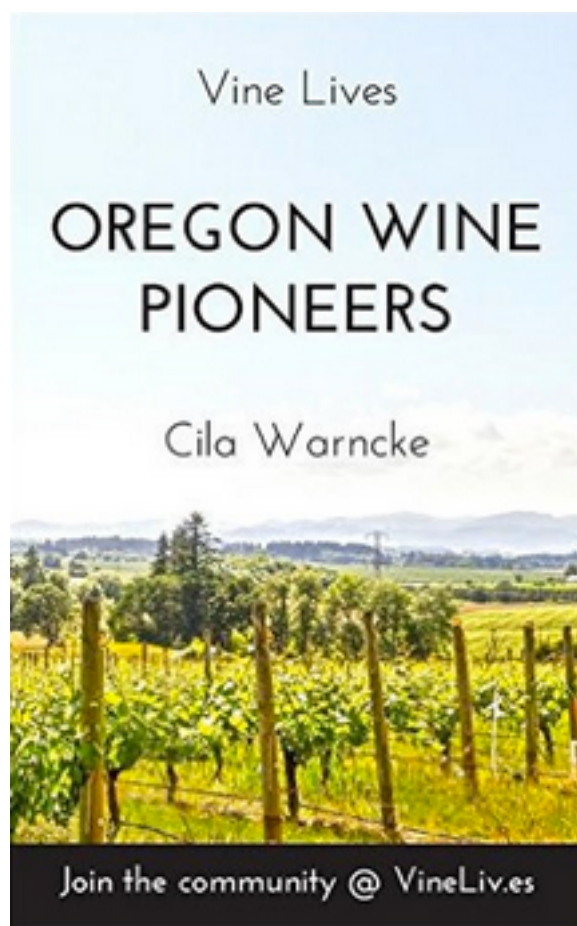
The information is presented through easy to understand graphics and includes original and easy to visualize colorful and detailed maps of wine regions unlike any available in other wine reference books. Sections include: “An over view of wine fundamentals,” “Profiles of most popular varietals as well as those under the radar,” “Guide to pairing food and wine,” “A regional section with wine maps,” and “Advice on finding undervalued wines and wine regions.”

Madeline Puckette is well qualified to compose this book as she is a certified sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers and has a background in graphic design.

Paperback, 230 pages, 2015, full color, \$25.

Oregon Wine Pioneers

Cila Warncke



As readers know, I have a special interest in the history of Pinot Noir and its pioneers in both California and Oregon. I was excited to find that this book offered fifteen highly readable personal accounts of the history of some of Oregon's most notable viticulturists and wineries. Although I consider myself informed about many of the Oregon Pinot Noir pioneers, I added to my knowledge in reading the chapters on Adelsheim, Elk Cove, A to Z Wineworks, Ponzi, Ghost Hill Cellars, Illahe, and others. Along with considerable personal insight on the people behind the wineries, valuable information is offered on Oregon's climate, geology and ethos.

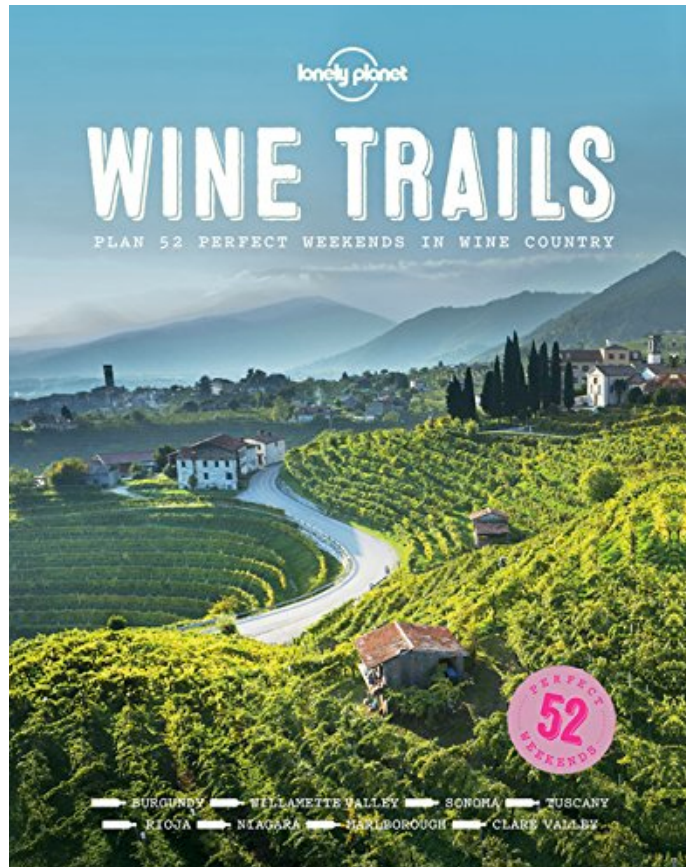
This is not an extensive wine guide per se, although maps and directions to the wineries are included, as well as restaurant and activity guides for major wine regions in Oregon. There are no technical wine discussions and no emphasis on comparative quality of wines from each winery. A few short wine reviews are included but are not particularly of value. The book's value is the inspirational life stories of those profiled in the four to five pages devoted to each winery. It is a great read with a glass of Oregon Pinot Noir in hand.

The author, Oregon native Cila Warncke, is a writer, journalist, photographer and wine enthusiast who has been published widely both in print and online.

Paperback, 231 pages, 2015, full color, \$20. Also ebook available.

Wine Trails: Plan 52 Perfect Weekends in Wine Country

Lonely Planet Travel Media Company



This book offers tasting tours through 327 wineries in 20 countries including well known wine regions. The weekend-long itineraries of special interest to Pinot Noir enthusiasts include sections on the Mornington Peninsula in Australia, Central Otago and Marlborough in New Zealand, Burgundy in France, Alto Adige in Italy, and the Central Coast, Santa Barbara, Sonoma and the Willamette Valley of the United States.

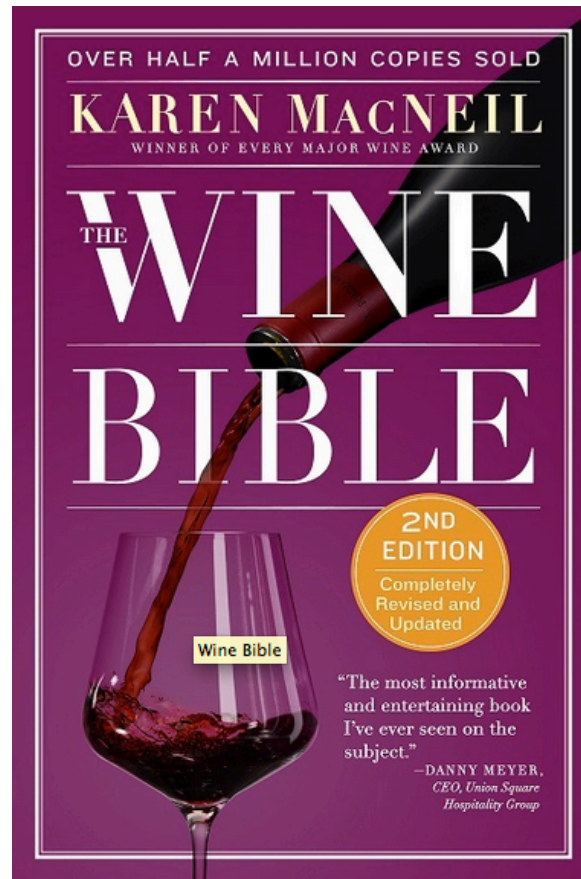
For Sonoma County, for example, 8 wineries are suggested visits (Cline Cellars, Ravenswood, Littorai, Wind Gap Wines, Paradise Ridge, Copain, Banshee, and Francis Ford Coppola), along with two recommended places to stay (H2 and Vintners Inn), two recommended places to eat (Scopa and Fremont Diner) and one celebratory event to attend (Sonoma County Harvest Fair). This rudimentary information only hints at the potential options in the region which offers many more excellent choices for winery visits, lodging, dining and events.

The itineraries include short descriptions of the wineries, a number of photos, and very basic maps which could not be used practically for navigation. I believe there are many better sources of wine regions travel information online. This book tries to cover the world and would have been better served to have a series of books concentrating on one country.

Hardcover, 320 pages, 2015, full color, \$24.99.

The Wine Bible

Karen MacNeil



This is a highly publicized and promoted book now published in its second edition in a completely revised and updated format. MacNeil, a Napa Valley resident, is the only U.S. winner of every major wine award in the English language. You can check out her national tour dates for this book from October 7 through December 9, 2015, on her website at www.karenmacneil.com. Praise for the book has come from many respected sources including the New York Times, Sunset Magazine, Wine & Spirits, and USA Today.

Any book that attempts to cover the encyclopedic subject of wine faces a daunting challenge. I have never found such books particularly appealing personally, since in-depth information on subjects is lacking: a little bit of everything, but not comprehensive coverage of any one subject. Thirty pages on Burgundy and fourteen pages on Oregon barely scratches the surface. In addition, because of the rapidly changing world of wine and the time required to compose a comprehensive book, such a guide can become quickly outdated. That said, this book is more credible and readable than any other comprehensive reference book on wine I have reviewed.

If you need one book as a reference source to answer your questions about wine, this reliable and accurate guide would be invaluable. If you like entertaining general books on wine that can be held in your hands, and read and enjoyed in short stints from cover to cover, the *Wine Bible* is a good choice.

Paperback, nearly 1,000 pages, black and white, 2015, \$24.95.

One of my readers, Blake Brown, recently recommended the book, ***La Tour d'Argent: Nothing is More Serious than Pleasure***, by Claude Terrail. This informative and engaging book would appeal to restaurateurs, gourmands, and francophiles. It captures the history of the restaurant from 1562 onward and includes many stories of guests, gala affairs, and inside restaurant information. Hardcover, \$25.

Pinot Briefs

California Wine Institute Promoting Mendocino County Road Trip The Wine Institute has launched a new series of California Wines Road Trips. First up in the series is Mendocino County. Visit www.discovercaliforniawines.com for an interactive map to search wineries by amenities such as tours, gardens, art displays, concerts and picnic area. Mendocino County has 13 AVAs and is best suited and known for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, although warmer inland climates feature Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Zinfandel. Besides grapes, there are 500 types of edible mushrooms in Mendocino County, ideal to pair with Pinot Noir!



Third Annual Wine Tourism Day to Give Back to Community Wineries and other business offering wine related events have joined to celebrate Wine Tourism Day on November 7, 2015, by hosting events throughout North America. Many event hosts will be donating all or a portion of their earnings from the day to a local charity or non profit of their choice. To host or attend an event in your area, visit www.WineTourismDay.org. The event is sponsored by zephyr adventures and taste vacations.

Oregon Pioneering Winemaker Bill Fuller Releases 2013 Wines In 1973, Bill Fuller moved from California to plant the Tualatin Vineyard and become one of Oregon's first winemakers. He has been recognized for many firsts in the Oregon wine industry. In 1997, Willamette Valley Vineyards merged with Tualatin Estate Vineyard and Bill retired. He rejoined the winemaking team at Willamette Valley Vineyards for his 40th vintage, releasing small lots of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from his favorite blocks. The special release wines are available for purchase online at www.willamettevalleyvineyards.com.

Historical Inaccuracies Revealed Regarding Oregon's Cury Planting There have been two articles published recently, one in the *Oregon Wine Press* (<http://oregonwinepress.com/article?articleTitle=david-hill-celebrates-50--1440697330--2178-->), and one in the *Lake Oswego Review* (<http://www.pamplinmedia.com/lor/54-my-community/275683-151236-get-a-side-of-history-with-that-glass-of-wine>) that misrepresent the dates of the "Cury clone" planting in the Willamette Valley. On this, the historic 50th anniversary of the first planting of Pinot Noir (and Pinot Gris) in the Willamette Valley, it is imperative that the historical facts regard the first planting be accurately reported. I have done considerable research on the history of the modern era of the Oregon wine industry, including accessing, when possible, all verifiable sources of information and historical documents. I believe in fairness to Oregon wine pioneer David Lett of The

Eyrie Vineyards and his remarkable accomplishments, that historical inaccuracies should be corrected. A letter I wrote to the *Oregon Wine Press* was published clarifying the dates of the first planting of Pinot Noir in the Willamette Valley as well as the first dates of the Coury planting: <http://oregonwinepress.com/article?articleTitle=dates-of-coury-planting-misrepresented--1443049617--2203-->. For a full report on the subject, refer to "Oregon Pinot Noir: Who Planted First?" at <http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/1090/>.

