



# PinotFile

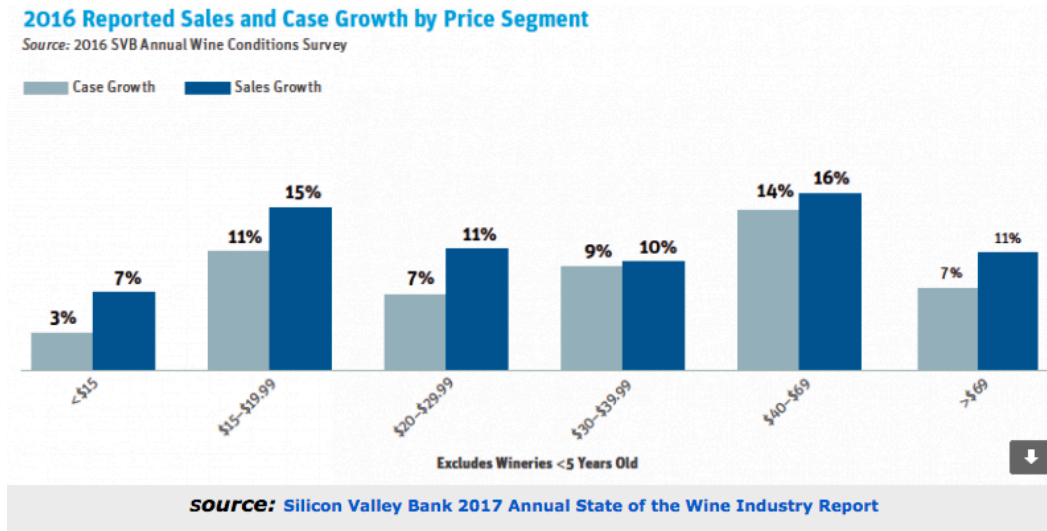
The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 10, Issue 48 February 15, 2017

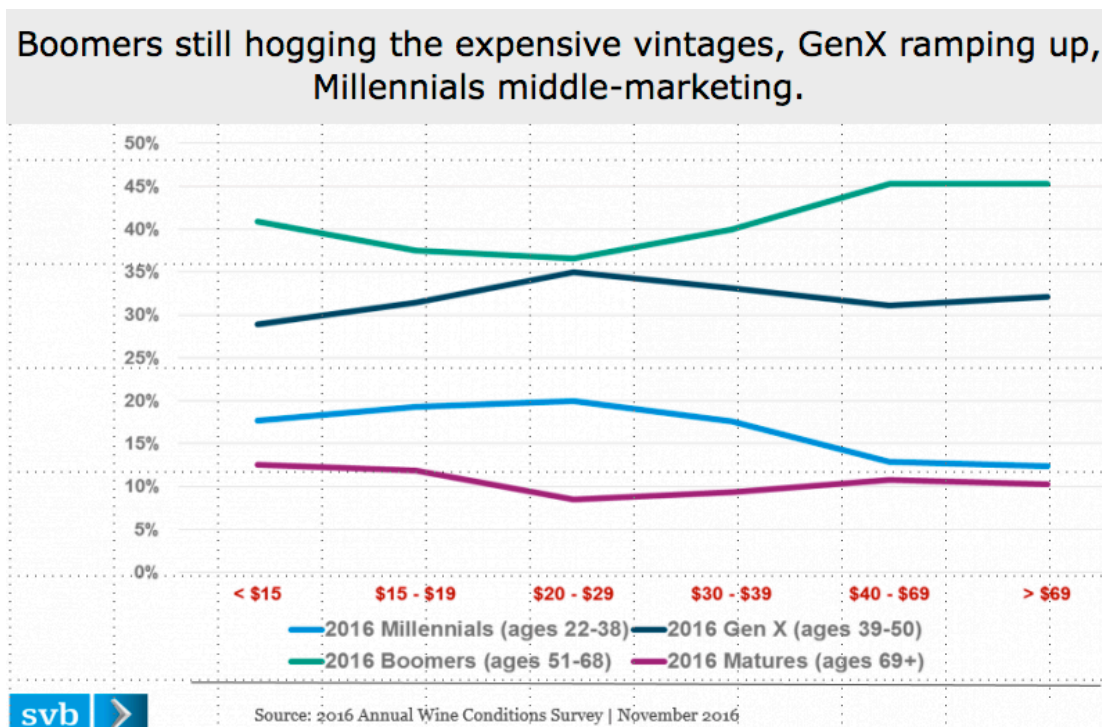
*Pinot Noir likes to be gently coddled*

## California Dreamin': New Releases

Sales of premium wines continue to grow, especially in the \$15-\$19.99 and \$40 to \$69 price range. The 2016 Silicon Valley Bank 2017 Annual State of the Wine Industry Report offered these reported sales and case growth by price segment in 2016:



The growth in the \$40-\$69 range continues to be dominated by Boomers (ages 51-68) and Gen X (ages 39-50):



Here is a number of California releases, some of which are dreamy, and most of which fall into the \$40-\$69 price range.

## Ancient Oak Cellars, Sebastopol, CA

Founded in 2006 by Ken and Melissa Moholt-Siebert, Ancient Oak Cellars has partnered with veteran winemaker Greg La Follette since 2014 to produce primarily vineyard-designated and reserve Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The Estate Siebert Ranch Vineyard is 15 acres of Pommard 4 clone planted by Ken's grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth. A big ancient oak marks the center of the 31-acre former sheep ranch and is the inspiration for the name of the winery. Wines are produced from the Siebert Ranch and several vineyards, most of which Ken farms. Visit [www.ancientoakcellars.com](http://www.ancientoakcellars.com). Private tasting is available in the cellar or vineyard.

**2014 Ancient Oak Cellars Siebert Ranch Single Vineyard Series Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., 400 cases, pH 3.50, TA 0.62. \$44. Pommard 4 clone from hillside block 5 planted by Henry Siebert when he was 80-years-old. Mostly native fermentation, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of black cherry, black raspberry and smoky oak. The wine makes a good impression on entry, the mid palate and finish, offering mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and cola with a supportive riff of toasty oak. Offering good harmony, this wine finishes with length and purpose.* **92.**

**2014 Ancient Oak Cellars Alcman Siebert Ranch Reserve Series Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., \$58. Wine named after Alcman, the earliest of nine great Greek lyric poets known for clarity of tone and rich visual description. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very sensual perfume of dark fruits, rose petal, peppery spices and oak. Impeccably balanced, with plenty of black cherry and black raspberry goodness accented with spice and cola. Sleek in texture and very charming, with enough structure to age. A classy wine.* **93.**



**2015 Ancient Oak Cellars Appellation Series Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.69, 900 cases, \$29. Produced primarily from Nurmi and Flyway vineyards. Native primary and secondary fermentations, *sur lie* aging with *bâttonage*. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Complex perfume of lemon oil, grilled pineapple, warm brioche, vanilla and chalk dust. Slightly creamy in the mouth, displaying very tasty flavors of lemon, pineapple, pear, and salted caramel. Nicely composed, with a lasting finish redolent of creme caramel. Rather ostentatious oak highlights, but no complaints from me.* **89.**

**2015 Ancient Oak Cellars Single Vineyard Series Flyway Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., pH 2.9, TA 0.57, RS <0.1 g/L, 1,500 cases, \$56. Old vines. Barrel fermented with native yeasts and *sur lie* aging with *bâttonage*. *Medium golden yellow color in the glass. Shy aromas of citrus, kumquat, petrichor and vegemite. Moderately rich, with flavors of lemon, pineapple, orchard fruits and subtle toast. Slightly creamy and nicely appointed with a lingering finish replete with righteous tangy lemon. A distinctive wine that intrigues and meshes the acidity well. Tasted twice.* **89.**



**2015 Ancient Oak Cellars Single Vineyard Series Nurmi Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., pH 2.9, TA 0.57, RS <0.1 g/L, 1,500 cases, \$56. Wente clone planted and farmed by Paul and Gail Nurmi. Barrel fermented with native yeast and aged *sur lie* with *bâttonage*. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Shy, but very pleasing aromas of citrus, lychee, brioche and a steely note. The wine is blessed with delicious flavors of lemon, yellow apple and the slightest barrel toast. Excellent vibrancy with juicy lemon goodness returning in waves on the finish. A serious offering that becomes more affectionate in the glass over time.* **94.**



**2015 Ancient Oak Cellars Reserve Series Kent Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.66, RS <0.1 g/L, 96 cases, \$60. Greg La Follette made his first vineyard designated wines twenty years ago from the Kent Ritchie Vineyard. This wine contains grapes from a selection of specific rows. Barrel fermented with native yeast and aged *sur lie* for 20 months with *bâttonage*. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Complex nose offering a perfume of crystallized lemon, prickly pear, white flower bouquet, earthy flora and sea breeze. The onslaught of lemon goodness wakes up the palate on entry and expands through the mid palate. Very harmonious, with a pleasingly viscous texture, offering nuances of spice, nutmeg, vanilla wafer, and buttery caramel. A praiseworthy wine that finishes with uncommon richness for a Chardonnay and literally slides off the back of the palate as it exits. 92.*

## **Boisset Collection, Santa Rosa, CA**

Boisset Collection is France's third largest wine group and includes multiple California wineries: Amberhill Wines, Buena Vista Winery, DeLoach Vineyards, Frenchie Winery, JCB by Jean-Charles Boisset, Lockwood Winery, Lyeth Estate, Raymond Vineyards and Wattle Creek Winery. The collection of historic and unique wineries is family owned, uniting Old World and New World of wine. The parents of Jean-Charles, Jean-Claude and Claudine, founded the family winery in 1961, and today the wineries stretch from Burgundy to the South of France to California's Napa Valley and Russian River Valley. Visit [www.boissetcollection.com](http://www.boissetcollection.com). Listen to Jean-Charles on Grape Radio at <http://www.graperadio.com/archives/2013/06/07/go-west-young-man-with-jean-charles-boisset/>.

All wines reviewed here are pre-releases except for the 2014 DeLoach Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir that was released in 2016, the 2013 No. 7 that was released in late 2016, and the JCB No. 3 that was released in December 2016. All JCB wines are 50 to 80 cases.

**2014 Buena Vista Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.54, 2,995 cases, \$25. Cellared and bottled by Buena Vista Winery, Santa Rosa and St. Helena. 100% de-stemmed, fermented in small open-top fermenters, and aged for 10 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is dominated by oak, revealing aromas of fresh ground coffee beans and toast. Smooth in the mouth with a mid weight core of black cherry fruit that plays second fiddle to conspicuous oak. The silky tannins and acidity are in favorable balance with the fruit, but the experience is like drinking a cold cup of coffee with cherry flavoring. 82.*

**2014 DeLoach Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.55, 8,926 cases, \$25. Sourced from BCD Vineyard, Becnel Vineyard, Heintz Vineyard and Murray Vineyard. Fermented in wooden open-top vats, hand punch downs, basket pressed, and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 10% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Shy aromas arrive over time in the glass revealing notes of Bing cherry, cranberry and oak spice and toast. Light to mid weight in style, with flavors of spiced Bing cherry, cola and tobacco. Satiny mouthfeel, with a bit of shallow impression on the mid palate, finishing with modest length. Easy to drink, but leans a bit too much on oak. 87.*

**2014 DeLoach Vineyards Marin Marin County Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.57227 cases, \$45. A blend of two mature vineyards in Marin County, Stubbs and Corda. Fermented in small open-top fermenters and aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Light reddish purple color in the glass. Demure aromas of cherry, strawberry and earthy flora arrive slowly in the glass with swirling. More expressive on the palate, yet delicate in weight, with primary flavors of red cherry and red berry. Nicely balanced, with a silken fabric and a very modest finish. 88.*

**2014 DeLoach Vineyards Maboroshi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.62, 802 cases, \$50. Vineyard is situated at 400 to 600 feet elevation in Sebastopol Hills. Clones 667 and 115 planted in Goldridge soil. Fermented in open top vats with hand punch downs. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Both savory and fruity on the nose, exhibiting aromas of cherry, dried herbs, wet mulch and a hint of tobacco. Very charming in the mouth, with expansive flavors of black cherry, savory herbs and tobacco robed in modest tannins. A silky smooth texture attracts, and the wine has commendable harmony, finishing with cherry and citric flavors. 90.*



**2014 DeLoach Vineyards Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.65, 1,350 cases, \$70. Very heavy bottle with a gold crest on the front. The 17-acre Estate Vineyard is certified Biodynamic®. One of only 64 wineries or vineyards in the U.S. with Demeter certified Biodynamic estate vineyards. 8 clones - 115, "828," Swan, La Tache, Calera, Mt. Eden, 777 and 23. Fermented for 16 months in individual lots with native yeasts in open top fermenters, basket pressed and aged on the lees in French oak barrels, 31% new, before being blended together and aged for an additional 2 months. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. A regal nose leads off with aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, forest floor, spice and toast. Plush and full-bodied in the mouth with accommodating tannic backbone, offering layers of black raspberry, blackberry and plum fruits accented with spice and dark chocolate. Almost too much of a good thing. Classy, with good acidity lifting the fruit load, finishing uncommonly long and generous. Best to lock this wine away for a few years. 92.*

**2012 JCB No 3 Ed. III Red Wine** 13.5% alc., \$123. A marriage of five vineyards in California and three top vineyards in Côte de Nuits, Burgundy. Aged 22 months in 100% French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Pleasant scent of black cherry, spice, herbs and beechwood. Lighter styled, with earthy flavors of cherry and raspberry, and an array of savory spices and herbs. The savory and fruit components compliment each other and the wine picks up interest over time in the glass. Drinking well now, with easy-going, fine-grain tannins, and a bright, uplifting finish. 90.*

**2013 JCB No 7 Sonoma Collection Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 500 cases, \$50. Fermented in wooden open-top fermenters with hand punch downs, basket pressed. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The aromas of black cherry, earthy flora, leather and toasty oak blend together nicely. Tasty flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and blackberry energize the attack and mid palate, persisting on the finish with lip-smacking goodness. A well-crafted wine with married tannins, deft oak integration and overall joy. 91.*

**2013 JCB No 22 Sonoma Collection Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.58, 150 cases, \$75. 11 is Jean-Charles Boisset's lucky number and this wine has twice the intensity of most Pinot Noirs and thus the title of the wine. Fermented in wooden open-top fermenters with hand punch downs, basket pressed, and aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Gorgeous, nose-filling aromas of dark stone fruits, pie spice, vanilla and subtle toast. Delicious flavors of cherry, raspberry, pie spices and vanilla with a subtle savory note in the background. Bright and seamless, with a sturdy finish of welcome length. A real charmer. 93.*

**2014 JCB No 6 Sonoma Collection Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$75. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry, strawberry and herb garden become more gracious over time in the glass as do the flavors that echo the nose. Amicable balance, with a silken texture, good vibrancy and a modest finish. Should benefit from another year or two in the cellar. 89.*

## Domaine De La Côte, Lompoc, CA

I previously reviewed three of the outstanding 2014 Pinot Noirs from Domaine De La Côte: [www.princeofpinot.com/article/1883/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/1883/). The layout of the vineyards is shown on the back label:



**2014 Domaine De La Côte Sta. Rita Hills AVA Pinot Noir** 12.5% alc., 3,294 cases, \$45. Estate grown, produced and bottled. 50% whole cluster, aged in 0% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Pleasing scent of cherry, raspberry, rose petal, pine needle and underbrush. Very elegant, juicy and refreshing in a mid weight styled wine with uplifting flavors of black cherry and black raspberry framed by silky smooth tannins and supported by the acidity.* Sta. Rita Hills is known for. *Tart cherry returns in waves on the lip-smacking finish. An excellent way to sample the DDLC style with some retail availability. Still solid the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **90.**



**2014 Domaine De La Côte Siren's Call Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 12.5% alc., 145 cases, \$120. Inaugural vintage from this vineyard. Estate grown, produced and bottled. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is remarkably complex, offering aromas of dark cherry, mysterious Asian spices, sous-bois, burnt tobacco and smoke. Light to mid weight in style, with invigorating acidity that forms the first impression.*

*Demure flavors of tart cherry and cranberry with a touch of spice and tobacco. The fine-grain tannins are supportive and make for easy approachability. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the nose was in full flight featuring all the best of whole cluster. The palate had picked up some weight, raspberry fruit arrived, the wine was vivid and vibrant, and the finish left a mouth-watering impression. You can just sense the cool ocean breeze in this wine.* **94.**



## Gehricke, Healdsburg

**2014 Gehricke Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., 948 cases, \$45. Small lot ferments. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels. Vinted and bottled by The Other Guys, Sonoma. *Light cherry red color in the glass. Demure aromas of slightly confectioned red cherry, baking spice and forest floor. Cherry driven, with added flavors of raspberry and cranberry, simple and easy going in a light to mid weight style, with a silky texture and very modest oak contribution.* **87.**

**2014 Gehricke Sonoma Los Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., 1,556 cases, \$39. Small lot ferments. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels. Vinted and bottled by The Other Guys, Sonoma. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Very giving fruit aromas of strawberry and cherry. Discreetly concentrated flavors of oak-kissed black cherry with added accents of cola, saffras and tobacco. Satiny in the mouth, with good balance and some finishing goodness. A little more oak-infused character than I prefer, but will please many especially at this modest price. 88.*

## LUMEN, Santa Maria, CA

A partnership between iconic Central Coast winemaker Lane Tanner and journalist, photographer and experienced wine salesman Will Henry. Together, they craft the wines in Santa Maria. Lane prefers to pick on the early side, producing wines that have lower alcohols, more vibrancy and freshness, and good age ability. The wines are available for purchase at [www.lumenwines.com](http://www.lumenwines.com). 25% off Lumen wines when a member of the Lumen Vintage Club.



**2014 LUMEN Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 990 cases, \$30. Fruit was picked early for freshness and lively acidity @ average 23.5° Brix. Clones 667, 777, Pommard 5 and Wädenswil 2A. 100% de-stemmed. Aged in 15% new and 85% neutral French and Hungarian oak barrels. Bottled unfinned and loosely filtered. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. A very savory wine leading off with aromas of black cherry, pice, dried herbs, peppercorn and nutty oak. Light to medium in weight with flavors that replicate the nose with additions of black raspberry and earthiness. The tannins are silky, and there is welcome freshness and juiciness. 89.*

**2014 LUMEN Sierra Madre Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., 99 cases, \$52. A selection of the best barrels from this vineyard this vintage. Harvest Brix 22.7°. Clone 777. 100% de-stemmed. Aged in 16% new and 84% neutral French and Hungarian oak barrels. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Earth embossed aromas of blackberry, black raspberry and allaliberry with complimentary spice. More dark red fruited on the palate with tastes of cherry, cranberry and pomegranate. Lithe and juicy, with a very sensual mouthfeel, sporting matched tannins, a savory thread of thyme and other herbs and some generosity on the finish. 91.*



**2014 LUMEN Sierra Madre Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay** 13.3% alc., 540 cases, \$30. Harvest Brix 22.1°. Robert Young and 15 clones. Barrel fermented and aged in 10% new and 90% neutral French and Hungarian oak. 100% MLF. Sterile filtered. *Moderate golden yellow color and clear in the glass. Aromas of lemon, apple, banana cream, buttery brioche, yeast and a hint of reduction that blows off. Flavors of lemon, pineapple, green apple and spice infused with steely resolve. Slightly creamy on the palate, with a hint of nutty oak, finishing with a bright apple note. The wine improves in the glass over time. 90.*

## Manross Wines, Sebastopol, CA

Pinot Noir is like an infant that responds to coddling. Some of the best domestic Pinot Noir is produced in tiny quantities of one to two barrels with loving care. That is the case with this Pinot Noir from winemaker Heather Manross. Heather followed her family's winemaking tradition by beginning her career at one of the largest wine retail and wholesale operations in Southern California where she had the opportunity to taste many wines. She moved to Northern California, taking on management positions for several prominent Napa Valley wineries where she learned winemaking and began to develop her winemaking style. Although she was not a huge fan of Napa wines, she learned that the most critical part of winemaking is starting with quality grapes. She crafted two barrels of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir in 2014, sourced from the Lone Oak Vineyard. This older vine, hillside vineyard was planted in 1982. The microclimate consists of very cool nights and morning fog with warmer afternoon temperatures allowing for the development of balanced fruit with bright acidity. The wine is available for purchase on the winery website at [www.manrosswines.com](http://www.manrosswines.com).



**2014 Manross Lone Oak Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.69, 50 cases, \$58. 100% Pommard clone. 30% whole cluster. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Exhilarating aromas of fresh Bing cherry, spice, vanillin and nutty oak. Polished and refreshing on the palate, with the mid weight essence of glorious black cherry, cherry cola and black raspberry flavors. Plenty of ripe sap, but vibrant, with a juicy acid underbelly. Lovely balance, with silken tannins and a compliment of oak. Still charged with deep cherry flavor and juiciness when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Uncommon verve in a seductively-appointed Pinot that is welcoming now. 94.*



## O'Connor Vineyard, Sebastopol

A single Pinot Noir produced from a family owned, 4-acre estate vineyard located in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Almost 30 years ago, a 100-year-old apple orchard was replaced with a vineyard. After selling Pinot Noir grapes to other wineries for a few years, the O'Connor Vineyard label was launched in 2005 by proprietors James and Mary O'Connor. The winemaker is Ron Johnson, the owners' son-in-law, who has been crafting wine for over twenty years. This wine is an exceptional treasure at a modest price. Visit the website at [www.oconnorvineyards.com](http://www.oconnorvineyards.com) to order or phone Mary at 707-823-4948.



**2014 O'Connor Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.66, 414 cases, \$35. Harvest Brix 25.2°. Pommard, 115 and 777 clones. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels. Winemaker is Ron Johnson, the vineyard owners' son-in-law. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Soaring aromas of Bing cherry, spice, toast and tobacco lead to a middleweight styled wine with delicious dark cherry fruit. The charge of fruit is buffered by vibrant acidity and silky tannins. There is definite barrel influence, but it seasons rather than dominates the wine. Very enjoyable, with a smooth texture and an exit bursting with savory oak and black cherry goodness.*

*A real charmer and quintessential Russian River Valley in character at a very reasonable price. 93.*

## Rodney Strong Vineyards & Davis Bynum, Healdsburg, CA

Davis Bynum was the first winery to produce a single vineyard Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley. The vintage was 1973 and the grapes came from Joe Rochioli's vineyard. The winery was acquired by Rodney Strong Vineyards who retained the name, continuing the heritage of hand-crafted single vineyard wines grown exclusively in the Russian River Valley. The winemaker is Greg Morhole along with consultant David Ramey.

Rodney Strong was among the first modern wine pioneers that planted Pinot Noir in the Russian River Valley. In 1968, he planted the River East Vineyard adjacent the winery in Healdsburg. This family owned winery is solar powered, certified sustainable, practices Fish Friendly Farming, and is Sonoma County's first carbon neutral winery. Winemakers are Rick Sayre and Justin Seidenfeld (along with Tom Klein and David Ramey on the Russian River Valley Reserve bottling).



**2014 Davis Bynum Jane's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.56, 10,354 cases, \$35. Harvest Brix average 24.9°. Clones 113, 114, 115, 777, 667, 2A, 23 and Pommard. Grapes are de-stemmed to stainless steel tanks for cold soak, followed by fermentation with native yeasts. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 31% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of a plethora of dark fruits including black cherry and black raspberry complimented with toasty oak. Impressive harmony and soothing in the mouth, with middleweight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and baking spice. Easy to cozy up to, finishing with a kiss of fruit that literally slides off the back of the palate. 91.*

**2014 Davis Bynum Jane's Vineyard Clone 23 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.55, 192 cases, \$55. Clone 23, imported from Wädenswil, Switzerland in 1966, is known as the Mariafeld clone. Harvest Brix 26.3°. Fermentation initiated with native yeasts. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels 36% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely perfume of fresh Bing cherry, spice and rose petal. Gutsy but not ponderous, with a flavorful core of earthy black cherry and mushroom flavors that engage the palate. Lush in the mouth, with deft oak management, a balanced tannic backbone, and a juicy finish filled with black cherry goodness. A grounded Pinot with character. 92.*



**2014 Rodney Strong Estate Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.52, \$25. Aged 13 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is inviting upon opening, offering aromas of Bing cherry, baking spices, and cola, but fades over time in the glass. The light to mid weight charge of Bing cherry fruit offers a modest attack and shallow mid palate depth, but finishes better than it enters with good length. The barrel treatment is conspicuous but not overbearing. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the oak was not more judiciously integrated, but the wine proved to be a good companion with food. 88.*



**2014 Rodney Strong Estate Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.55, \$30. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is reserved initially, but opening over time in the glass, offering aromas and flavors of forestry cherry, dark red berry, spice and earthy flora. Silken in the mouth, with good lift, taught tannins, and a spirited finish featuring persistent cherry goodness. 89.*

**2014 Rodney Strong Estate Vineyards Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.52, \$45. Aged on the lees for 11 months with monthly battonage in French oak barrels, 36% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is sullen, offering only subtle aromas of black cherry, earth and oak. Somewhat monolithic on the mid weight plus palate with flavors of ripe black cherry, black raspberry and tobacco. The tannins are quite modest assisting the silky mouthfeel that is the wine's best feature. The wine lacks a bit of acidic lift. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, oak had come to the forefront, but the seductive texture still stood out. It was challenging for me to predict the future of this wine based on its current withdrawn state. 89-91.*

**Sanglier Cellars, Santa Rosa, CA**



This winery is vineyard focused, with winemaking only meant to coax, aid and help the grapes find their natural course through fermentation. All vineyards are farmed sustainably, organically or biodynamically. Winegrower and winemaker Glenn Alexander has been farming hundreds of acres of wine grapes for some of Sonoma and Napa county's best known wineries for many years. From those hundreds of acres, Glenn chooses fruit from 11 acres for his wines. He knows these 11 acres intimately and can influence wine quality in many wines, including proper sizing of the vine relative to crop yield, arranging leaves or removing leaves to allow only the desired amount of sunlight to reach the clusters, adding nutrition or irrigation (although minimalist in approach), removing excess fruit to insure the remaining clusters ripen evenly and at the desired pace, and finally, when and how harvest is carried out with the goal of picking at the best levels of flavor, tannins and acidity.

**2013 Sanglier Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.55, 416 cases, \$45. Pommard, Calera, Swan and 115 clones. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 70% 1 and 2-year-old. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose really blossoms over time, attracting the drinker to bright aromas of cherry, red berry, woodland and sous-bois. A cherry bombast featuring a mid weight core of perfectly ripened Bing cherry that is expansive in the mouth and carries over with purpose through the finish. Easy going, with silky tannins, juicy acidity and solid balance. Still delightful the following day when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 90.*



**2014 Sanglier River Tusque Sonoma County Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.57, 224 cases, \$36. "Tusque" translates to "the old lands" in French. Clones are Swan, Calera, 115 and 667. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, 75% 1 and 2-year-old. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black raspberry and grape must are accented with a hint of underbrush. The black raspberry, blackberry and black grape fruits veer to the ripe side but never cross over. Modest in weight, but blessed with vibrant fruit flavor that grabs hold to the very long, dark berry infused follow through. The balance is impeccable. 91.*

**2014 Sanglier Old Camp Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, 220 cases, \$55. Sourced from Old Camp Vineyard. Aged 19 months in French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. There is an intra berry fermentation scent in this wine with notes of rose petal, tutti-fruity and pine sap accompanying the dark cherry fruit. Plenty of sweet dark cherry and berry fruit to satisfy in a somewhat husky wine with sinewy tannins. A bit of spice, vanilla and Juicy Fruit gum flavors add interest. The finish is remarkably intense and persistent, lasting well over 30 seconds, and the longest of the 2014 Pinots tasted from Sanglier. The Beaujolais character and lengthy finish define this wine. 92.*



**2014 Sanglier Emilia's Cuvée Family Reserve Bennett Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.60, 155 cases, \$60. Calera and Swan clones grown at Laguna Vineyard. Aged 19 months in French oak barrels, 40% new, 60% 1 and 2-year-old. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers its charms slowly over time in the glass, reaching a climax filled with dark cherry, berry, rose petal and nutty oak aromas. A*

*little more oak and structure in this high collared wine, filled with succulent boysenberry and blackberry fruit flavors that saturate the palate. Prodigious, yet not jammy, with a pleasing acid backbone and a good grip of juicy fruit on the ostentatious finish. A superb wine that is delicious now, but will benefit from short term aging. 94.*



## More Wines

**2013 Furthermore Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., pH 3.60, 151 cases, \$55. Harvest Brix 28.0°. Pisoni and "828" clones. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Very savory nose featuring aromas of earthy flora, tobacco, mushroom, black cherry, strawberry and vanilla. Silky on entry, with mid weight flavors of plum, black cherry, black raspberry, mocha, herbs and spice. Elegantly composed with a generous dollop of oak and some dry tannin on the finish. 89.*



**2013 Soliste Solitaire Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.3% alc., 52 cases and 78 magnums, \$100. From a vineyard nestled in a redwood forest. Multiple passes through the vineyard selecting only the very best grapes. 50% whole cluster fermentation. Aged in one 600-liter barrel for 28 months. The model for this wine is the Bertheau Bonnes Mares. *Light cherry red color in the glass. A very young wine that needs decanting or more time in the cellar to evolve. Over time in the glass, lovely aromas of darker cherry and berry, rose petal, sous-bois and spice arrive with a gentle blanket of oak. More expression, yet reticent, on the palate, with a mid weight core of juicy black cherry fruit, spice and savory herbs that commands attention on the mid palate and persists through a pleasingly satin finish. Much better the following day when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. No hurry to pop the cork on this one, much like a Bonnes Mares. Let the oak integrate further, the nuances rise up and the whole cluster work its magic. 92-94.*



**2016 Waxwing Blair Vineyard Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir Rosé** 12.7% alc., 42 cases, \$23. Release March 2017. Pommard 4 clone. Whole cluster pressed, fermented in stainless steel. Aged in barrels with weekly lees stirring. Bottled January 27, 2017, after 3 months in barrel. *Delicate apricot color in the glass. This is a people-pleasing wine with many admirable attributes. The nose is alive and sustained in the glass, offering aromas of apricot, strawberry, cherry, blood orange and a floral note. The delicious flavors of cherry, strawberry white peach and apricot have good weight and are bright and lifted. The wine is perfectly balanced with fresh acidity, finishing with a blood orange tang. The best domestic rosé that I have experienced in quite awhile. Serve chilled of course. 93.*



# Aged California Pinot Noir: Proceed at Your Own Risk

Most California Pinot Noir is ready to drink upon release, but may improve after a few years in bottle. It is the rare bottling that takes on an ingratiating personality over the long term. Sommelier Lauriann Green-Solin has believes in the “20% Rule.” She says, “Only 20% of wines have aging potential past one or two years. Why? Because they are 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 (polyphenols such as various tannins are natural preservatives that give wine the potential for a long life). 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.” Wines that are of poor quality when young will not be expected to improve simply by cellaring them. A wine cellar is not a wine hospital.

Most California Pinot Noir is ready to drink upon release, and some will improve after a few years in bottle, but most are not made for long term aging. “Improvement” depends on the preferences of the drinker and will only be realized by those who like the effects of aging on Pinot Noir. Over time, the tannins become softer and tertiary characters develop. The fruit loses freshness and becomes more dried in character. Vegetal aromas 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. Faults in wine may also exaggerate over time.

## Characters in Wine

**Primary:** Characters that are intrinsic to the grape are also known as grape variety characters. These aromas and flavors often defy proper description in Pinot Noir which can display a blend of fruits ranging from red to black. Primary characters should always prevail over secondary characters.

**Secondary:** Aromas and flavors due to alcoholic fermentation and maturing in oak barrels. Yeasts break down sugar in grape juice producing alcohol and carbon dioxide gas, as well as minute amounts of other substances known as the secondary products of fermentation. Secondary aroma depends on the level of sugar in the grapes. The greater the quantity of sugar involved, the more intense the secondary aromas of alcoholic fermentation. Examples are aldehydes (yeast, sourdough, bruised apple), esters (banana, nail varnish), fatty acids (soap, candle wax) from primary fermentation and diacetyl (dairy, butter) from malolactic fermentation. A large number of secondary characters may arise from oak barrel aging including toast, coffee, mushroom, truffles, etc.

**Tertiary:** Also known as “bottle bouquet,” tertiary characters develop from aging through recombination of esters and alcohols after alcoholic and malolactic fermentation are complete. Tertiary aromas are properly called “bouquet,” whereas primary and secondary smells are best referred to as “aromas.” Typically, the aged character consists of a bouquet and flavor profile of old wine cellar, undergrowth, tea, rose, tobacco leaf, mulch, leather and dried fruit. Tertiary characters are the hallmark of aged Pinot Noir and are an acquired taste that comes from experience. Few consumers age California Pinot Noir, so they don’t know what exceptional aged Pinot Noir really tastes like, and whether it will turn out to suit their taste.

The title of this article, “Proceed at Your Own Risk,” refers to the fact that wine writer Tim Patterson has pointed out: You can estimate how long a wine will live, but you cannot tell what the wine will smell or taste like.” It is challenging to predict the future sensory profile, and even more challenging to predict whether you will like the wine when it does age.

The unpredictability of the transformation of California Pinot Noir is complicated by a number of factors that influence the eventual result: balance, acidity, tannins, whole cluster inclusion, type of cooperage and length of oak barrel aging, typicality of region, cellar conditions, ABV, size of bottle and vintage.

My last extensive look at aged domestic Pinot Noir was in October 2016 when I reviewed 178 wines: [www.princeofpinot.com/article/1735/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/1735/). I concluded that most domestic Pinot Noirs that are aged five or more years are frequently drinkable, even enjoyable, but not as tantalizing as those wines less than five years of

age. I pointed out that the taster's palate will confirm or dispute this generalization as some domestic Pinot Noir drinkers will undoubtedly prefer the nuances and tertiary characters that accompany well-aged Pinot Noir. My advice was, "Far better to drink a domestic Pinot Noir too soon than too late."

For this review of 42 aged California Pinot Noirs, I choose wines from four producers that I had acquired wines from and cellared through the years. All wines have been perfectly cellared in my wine locker at least 6 years, with little or no movement over the time of storage. All wines were closed with cork. I have kept the reviews succinct and scoreless. I should point out that I have a bias for younger California Pinot Noir over aged versions, but when you discover a truly great aged California Pinot Noir, it can be a near-epiphanic experience.

## **Littorai, Sebastopol, CA**

Littorai wines are known for balance and quality,, making them ideal candidates for aging. All wines produced are also offered in magnum format that further enhances age ability. The B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Pinot Noir is my favorite among the many excellent wines in the Littorai lineup. Cameron and Bridgit Thieriot bought the property in the Western Sonoma Coast in 1988 and the first part of the vineyard was planted by the late Warren Dutton. Subsequent plantings in 1994 and 1996 brought the total size to 8.5 acres of Pinot Noir (114, 667, 777 and Pommard) and Chardonnay (Old Wente, Robert Young). The site is located near the town of Occidental across the street from Summa Vineyard. It is widely known as one of the premier vineyards in the Sonoma Coast appellation. A divorce in the mid 2000s prompted the change in name of the vineyard from Thieriot to B.A. Thieriot. Cameron now farms Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay in the Santa Ynez Valley and produces wines under the Thieriot Wines label.

Ted Lemon vinifies his Pinot Noir with a varying amount of whole cluster from none up to 60 per cent. After a cold soak, the wines are fermented in traditional open-top vats and punch downs are by hand. All the wines undergo native yeast fermentation and complete malolactic fermentation, as long as nature does not dictate otherwise. Aging is carried out in 30%-50% new French oak barrels for 16-18 months. The wines have enough flesh to be appealing when young, but show best after a few years in the cellar. Since Ted does not strive for consistency, every vintage is unique and therein lies the charm. They are among the most age worthy examples of California Pinot Noir.



**2004 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color with slight rim bricking. Sexy bouquet of leather, potpourri, dank cellar, sous-bois and dark fruits with staying power in the glass. Still admirable attack and length in the mouth of well-spiced, and very ripe black cherry and black raspberry fruits that have a slight roasted tone. Good lift, with silken tannins, complimentary oak driven notes of pine, tea leaf and tobacco. This beauty still has some swagger. Drink now to 2022.

**2005 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color with very slight rim bricking. Plenty going on in this wine to attract your attention. The bouquet offers notes of dark cherry, savory and other spices, cola, pipe smoke and wet brick. The mid weight black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors are framed by noticeable toasty oak and there is also a vegetal riff. The fruit is a bit faded and dried out but still enjoyable. Elegantly composed, with silky tannins, finishing juicy with tastes of cherry, green pepper and oak. Drink now to 2020.

**2006 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc.. Light cherry red color with very slight rim bricking. Inviting bouquet of cherry, pie spice and sandalwood, fading a bit over time in the glass. Light to mid weight styled with a delicious core of black cherry fruit engaged by immersed tannins. Excellent vibrancy, gorgeous balance, and a sustained cherry-driven finish. Still enjoyable the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, but fruit faded and oak showing up. Drink up.

**2007 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Somewhat muted aromas of dark berries, black currant, chocolate wafer, vanilla and sandalwood. Rich, concentrated and sappy black cherry and blueberry-pomegranate fruit core with toasty oak in the background. Good acid verve and plenty of structure to support the fruit load. About the same when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, with red (strawberry) and dark (blueberry-pomegranate) fruit and baking spice flavors still lively. Drink now to 2023.



**2008 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose lacks expression, offering only demure aromas of plum, black cherry, oak spice and smoke. Guaiacol dominates the flavor profile with added black cherry fruit. Good tannic backbone and lengthy finish. Enjoyment will depend on tolerance for smoke taint. (When a bottle was reviewed in December 2010, the smoke taint was not evident) Drink up.

**2009 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The bouquet reminds of a walk in the forest with added notes of black cherry and black raspberry. Rather bold, with plenty of sweet, concentrated boysenberry and black raspberry fruit flavor. A note of star anise and other spices add interest. Vigorous, yet lively acidity and balanced tannins. Notable richness of fruit on the finish. Still remarkable the following day with copious amounts of fresh black cherry, blackberry and spice flavors. Drink now to 2024+.

**2005 Littorai The Haven Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc.. Moderately dark reddish purple color with a brownish tinge and some rim bricking. Complicated bouquet featuring mocha java, wet mulch, cinnamon toast, oiled wood, clove, and dark berry fruits. I found the nose very ingratiating. Mid weight flavors of black cherry, blackberry, black tea and a prevalent earthiness. Still offering some fresh fruit that maintains over time in the glass. Beautifully balanced, with a good acid tang and staying power on the finish. A real treat. Drink now to 2022.

**2005 Littorai Mays Canyon Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers medicinal aromas along with hints of acetone, white flower bouquet and plum. Fading and dry dark red berry and cherry fruit with noticeable tannin and barrel overlay. Still juicy, but not very charming. Drink up.

**2005 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc.. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Deep bouquet of cherries, grilled beef, smoke, mocha java and oak spice. The mid weight flavors of red cherry, red currant, baking spice and nutmeg attract, as does the silk and satin mouthfeel. Very fresh and like

able, with excellent harmony, gentle tannins, and welcome intensity of oak-kissed fruit on the sustained finish. Drink now to 2022.

**2006 Littorai Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc.. Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Fresh bouquet of cherry pie, rose petal, compost and toast. Flat-out delicious black cherry and black raspberry core. Elegantly composed in a light to mid weight style, with impressive attack, expansion and amazing long finish. Added tertiary notes of earth, fig and dried cherry bring joy. Juicy and vibrant. An exceptional, even amazing, aged Pinot Noir that was the most outstanding wine in this tasting of ten aged Littorai wines. Drink now to 2022.



Note: I did not focus on aged California Chardonnay in this review but did sample two older Littorai Chardonnays. My experience over the years tasting many examples of aged Littorai Chardonnay and the delight with these two 2005 examples, indicates that Littorai Chardonnay ages extremely well, and can be exceptional if the minds of drinkers that prefer the tertiary characters that come with aging. Chardonnay lacks the polyphenols that are critical for aging red wines, but higher acidity in Chardonnay can function as a preservative.

**2005 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.2% alc.. Moderately light copper color. Bouquet of dried apricot, roasted macadamia nut, bruised apple, agave syrup and yeast. Nicely balanced, with flavors of grilled pineapple, roasted nuts, caramel, and even botrytized white wine. Fantastic in a California style. Drink up.

**2005 Littorai Mays Canyon Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.9% alc.. Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Bouquet of grilled lemon, smoky toast, old book and woodshed. Delicious flavors of lemon curd, well-ripened pineapple, dried apricot, apple and Nutella. Slightly creamy in the mouth with impeccable balance and some finishing length. Also fantastic in more of an Old World style. Drink now to 2020.

## **Paul Lato, Santa Maria, CA**

Since 2002, Paul Lato, a former sommelier, has been crafting stellar Pinot Noir, Syrah and Chardonnay from Santa Barbara County vineyards at Central Coast Wine Services in Santa Maria. He is a fan of the late Henri Mayer of Burgundy, and the older styled wines of Williams Selyem, and in step, he de-stems all of his fruit (except in Syrahs). The alcohols are relatively high, not always due to high Brix at harvest, but in part due to the level of humidity in the winemaking facility that concentrates the wines. That said, the fruit tends to the ripe side. Cold soaks are often up to 8 days, fermentations are somewhat warm, and the wines are gently fined with egg whites and bottled unfiltered. His goal is always balance and elegance.

Based on this tasting and previous samplings, the wines hold up best in the 8 year post vintage time window.



**2007 Paul Lato Fiddlestix Vineyard “Sine Cera” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 125 cases, unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. An aged bouquet of dried dark cherry, prune, vegetation, leather boot and oak. Flavors of roasted fruit and raisin backed by nutty oak. Sleek in the mouth with immersed tannins and noticeable oak on the somewhat generously fruited finish, but the fruit is beginning to tire and fade. Drink up.*

**2008 Paul Lato Fiddlestix Vineyard “Sine Cera” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 125 cases, unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Love the bouquet of cherry, spice, sandalwood, nuts and leathery oak. Charming in the mouth with silky tannins and inviting flavors of black cherry and sassafras. Beautifully balanced, with subtle oak involvement, and an appealing finish redolent of black raspberry fruit. Drink now to 2022.*

**2009 Paul Lato Fiddlestix Vineyard “Sine Cera” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 125 cases, unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Bouquet of cardamom spice, tobacco, cigar smoke, mulch, wood shop and black cherry leads off. Lush in the mouth, with a charge of well-ripened dark red and purple fruits framed by modest tannins. Generous and persistent dry, but not bitter, finish. Silky and elegant and very pleasing, but there is slightly intrusive oak overlay. Drink now to 2022.*

**2008 Paul Lato Gold Coast Vineyard “Duende” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 100 cases, unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The bouquet of black cherry, exotic spices, toast and nutty oak is initially enjoyable, but notes of prune and band-aid appear over time. Plush and rich on the palate, with a charge of black cherry and blackberry fruits and added flavors of tar, marzipan, and black tea. The tannins are well integrated and the finish is lengthy. Most appealing when first opened. Drink up.*

**2009 Paul Lato Gold Coast Vineyard “Duende” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 100 cases, unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Well-sustained bouquet of cherry, mashed berries, spice and savory herbs. Redder fruit in this vintage with an accent of herbal tea. Bright and somewhat crisp, with balanced tannins, complimentary oak treatment, and a long finish. Delightful! Drink now to 2022.*

**2010 Paul Lato Gold Coast Vineyard “Duende” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 75 cases, unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The bouquet offers a significant contribution from oak-driven aromas of spice and burnt tobacco, but there is added appeal in aromas of Bing cherry and rose petal. A middleweight styled wine, with a black cherry core accented with smoke and toast. Silky tannins with an*

*elegant impression, singing with a deep and lasting finish replete with cherry and raspberry fruits. Drink now to 2022.*

**2011 Paul Lato Gold Coast Vineyard “Duende” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., 75 cases, unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of black cherry, herbs, earthy flora and eucalyptus. Quite silky in the mouth, with a mid weight attack of black cherry and blueberry-pomegranate fruits and subtle oak barrel accents. Inviting harmony and polish with an appealing but not exceedingly long finish. Drink now to 2022.*

**2009 Paul Lato Solomon Hills Vineyard “Suerte” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., 200 cases, unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with a bouquet of black stone and berry fruits, dark rose petal, potpourri, toast and spice. Mid weight plus styled and slightly creamy on the palate, with a big gulp of boysenberry and blackberry fruit. Still fresh with enough tannins and fruit to balance the high alcohol for further evolution. Drink now to 2024+.*



**2009 Paul Lato Hilliard Bruce Vineyard “Algeria” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 100 cases, unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting bouquet of dried cherry, burnt tobacco, grilling spices and tea leaf. Fruit-driven, with a core of black raspberry and blackberry fruits with subtle accents of spice, herbs, earth and oak. Has more aged tertiary character than the 2008 vintage. Gratuitous texture with good fine-grain tannic bones. Drink now to 2020.*

**2009 Paul Lato Zotovich Vineyard “Seabiscuit” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 75 cases, unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is initially quite complex, offering a bouquet of black cherry, spice, brioche, forest floor, and salinity. Fresh and invigorating upon opening, but fading slightly over time in the glass. Impressive harmony and elegance with nothing sticking out, offering flavors of black cherry and purple and black berries. Well-proportioned tannins, with notable fruit persistence on the finish. Drink now to 2022.*

## **WesMar Winery, Sebastopol, CA**

The Pinot Noirs from WesMar (“Wes-Mare”) are fashioned in a style reminiscent of the original Williams Selyem wines. This not surprising since proprietors and winemakers Kirk Hubbard and Denise Selyem both learned winemaking at Williams Selyem when Burt Williams and Ed Selyem were at the helm. They still use retired rectangular open-top milk storage tanks that go back to the early days of Williams Selyem. The winery is a garagiste operation, working out of a small warehouse in a former apple processing plant on Gravenstein Highway in Sebastopol. Kirk and Denise do all the work themselves as there are no employees. Their operation harkens back to a simpler time in the wine industry when consumers visited wineries by appointment, got personal attention and learned to bond with owners, and bought the wines directly from the source.

Fermentation in the open-top stainless steel milk storage tanks (pictured below) allows good access for hand punch downs and better skin to juice extraction due to the generous horizontal rather than vertical dimensions of the tanks. Whole cluster ranges from 20%-40%, depending on the vintage and a number of other factors. This allows for enhanced aroma and flavor nuances as well as age ability, yet preserves early drink ability that many consumers prefer. Fermentations typically last 7-10 days after which pressing is done with a vintage bladder press once used for apples. Pinot Noirs are aged in 50% to 70% new Francois Frères oak barrels for 11 months. The entire winemaking process is gravity flow as WesMar owns no pumps. The wines are usually bottled unfinned and unfiltered.





I sampled a number of Pinot Noirs from the 2005 and 2006 vintages in 2010: [www.princeofpinot.com/article/970/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/970/), and the wines performed well overall. This tasting offers some wines with additional age and the results would lead me to drink the wines at younger ages, although the magnums held up better.

**2005 WesMar Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc.. *Dark reddish purple color with slightest bricking of the rim. Bouquet of black raspberry, damp oak, old sock and slight acetone. A funky wine on the palate, with mid weight plus musty flavors of strawberry, black cherry and black raspberry framed by firm tannins, ending with some length. Drink up.*

**2009 WesMar Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc.. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Deposits in the neck of the bottle. Aromas of acetone, sweet smoke and horse. Full-bodied flavors of black raspberry and blackberry with a carry over of the horsey note. Silky tannins, with some finishing fruit presence. Oxidative character overwhelms.*

**2010 WesMar Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc.. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Slightest hint of oxidation (acetone) recedes. Fruit never shows up on the nose, but seasoned oak does. Much better on the palate, with flavors of blackberry, cassis and dark chocolate. Good harmony in a wine offering prodigious sweet fruit, balanced tannins, good freshness, and some length on the finish. Drink now to 2022.*

**2007 WesMar Balletto Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc.. *Moderate reddish purple color with very slight rim bricking. Bouquet of sweet smoke, burnt tobacco, tea leaf, spice and brioche. Still offers plenty of spiced cherry goodness, with admirable harmony. The tannins have melded, and the wine finishes on a dried cherry note. Still enjoyable the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Drink now to 2022.*

**2008 WesMar Balletto Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc.. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Oxidized aromas of nail polish remover and apple core. Disjointed in the mouth, with flat black cherry, Dr. Pepper, and unpleasant vegetal flavors, mild fine-grain tannins, and a bitter finish. An unsuccessful bottle that is now defective.*

**2009 WesMar Balletto Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc.. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Bouquet of ripe dark stone and berry fruits with some oak as well. Full-bodied and luscious on the palate with flavors of blackberry and spiced plum. A big gulp of fruit with well-matched tannins. Drink now to 2020.*

**2006 WesMar Oehlman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc.. *Light cherry red color with mild rim bricking in the glass. The bouquet offers notes of dried cranberry, pipe smoke, white pepper and straw.*

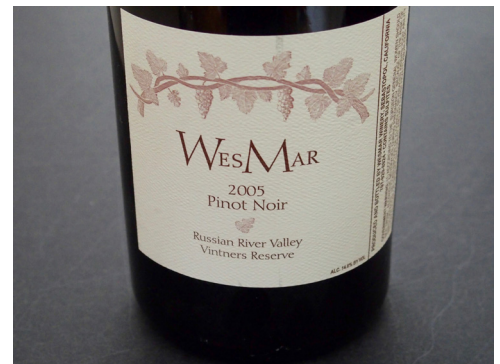
*Light to mid weight in style, with a black cherry core accented with notes of white pepper and herbs. A very elegant wine, with delicate, silky tannins, and somewhat faded, shallow fruit. Drink now to 2018.*

**2007 WesMar Oehlman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc.. *Moderately light cherry red color with slight bricking of the rim. The bouquet unfolds nicely over time in the glass, revealing a perfume of red cherry, spice, burnt tobacco and sandalwood. On the lighter, delicate side, with pleasant flavors of red cherry and cranberry framed by silky tannins. A charming wine that doesn't jolt the senses, but has pleasing qualities. Drink now to 2020.*

**2008 WesMar Oehlman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc.. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Fresh berry fruit shows up right after opening, but fades over time when the bouquet is dominated by aromas of cola, seasoned and spicy oak, leather, dried cherry and earthiness. The juicy mid weight cherry core is oak infused and clothed in modest tannins. More fruit sap than the 2006 and 2007 bottlings and a little more structure, but I still prefer the 2007 wine. Drink now to 2022.*

**2003 WesMar Piner Ranch Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., Magnum. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass with no rim bricking. Aromas of compost, worn leather, toasty oak, rose petal, black cherry and bruised apple. Very enjoyable, with mid weight flavors of sweet black cherry, blueberry and blackberry, black tea, tar, cola, tobacco and allspice. Good rich richness backed by balanced tannins and some intensity on the finish. Drink now to 2020.*

**2005 WesMar Vintners Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., Magnum. *Moderately light reddish purple color with slightest rim bricking. Intriguing aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, old book, damp oak, earthy flora, and cigar smoke. Noticeably fresh mid weight flavors of black cherry, black currant, Crimini mushrooms, and tobacco. The wine has great appeal with a good acid verve and finishing presence, although the fruit is slightly dry and the wine finishes with slight astringency. This Pinot has definitely earned its Reserve badge. Drink now to 2022.*



**2009 WesMar Oehlman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., Magnum. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The bouquet is quite charming initially, showing aromas of cherry, cola, and spice, but oak takes over with time in the glass and the fruit fades. A harmonious and juicy wine with a plush mouthfeel, offering ripe fruit flavors, particularly black cherry and blackberry, underlain with oak seasoning. More faded the following day with little fruit pleasure when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Drink now to 2020.*

## **Windy Oaks Estate, Corralitos, Santa Cruz Mountains, CA**

Proprietor and winemaker Jim Schultze announces his wines with, "All estate, all gravity, all the time." The Schultze Family vineyard is 15 acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay situated at 900 feet above Monterey Bay in Corralitos, at the southern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA. He tries to do the most he can in the vineyard and the least he can in the winery. Most fermentations employ 50% wild yeast and are lengthy, lasting 30 to 45 days. 25%-30% whole cluster inclusion is the rule since the stems from his site are often ripe. Jim is obsessive about his cooperage, and travels to Burgundy each year to meet with coopers. He uses 3-year-old air-dried, tight-grained, French oak barrels exclusively. Typically, he ages Pinot Noir for 17-27 months in 35% new oak barrels, with larger percentages used in certain bottlings. His winery has all the accretments for Pinot Noir production including a basket press and a modern bottling line. His approach to vinification of Pinot Noir lends itself to age ability, and the results of this tasting confirm this.



**2005 Windy Oaks Estate Cuvée Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate brown tinged reddish purple color in the glass. This wine was pretty interesting upon opening but faded quickly. Aromas of spice, pine oil and worn leather led to some faded flavors of black cherry, burnt tobacco and spice. Elegant and silky, with immersed tannins and some drive on the finish initially. Drink up.*

**2006 Windy Oaks Estate Cuvée Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate brown tinged reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with a bouquet of rose petal, exotic spices, stem and sous-bois. Good vibrancy, with appealing flavors of black cherry, raspberry and spice. Silky on the palate with a juicy finish. This wine has held up remarkably well, but begins to fade over time in the glass. Drink up.*

**2007 Windy Oaks Estate Cuvée Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. This wine is oxidized, with aromas of sherry and nail polish remover. Better on the palate, with flavors of black cherry, plum and brown spice with good vitality and some persistence on the finish. This particular bottle is defective but drinkable.*

**2007 Windy Oaks Estate Limited Release Wild Yeast Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Nice bouquet of black cherry, forest floor and a touch of oak. Exuberant in a mid weight style, with flavors of black cherry and black raspberry framed by supportive tannins. Enjoyable, but leans a little too much on oak. Drink now to 2020.*

**2008 Windy Oaks Estate Limited Release Wild Yeast Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Complex bouquet of dark red cherry and berry, woodland spice, rose petal, marzipan, vanilla and stem. Very tasty core of middleweight cherry fruit with impressive mid palate intensity and remarkable persistence. Subtle tertiary notes of tea, root beer, chocolate and mushroom. Inviting harmony, with a silky mouthfeel and an appealing freshness. The fruit is not dried out at all. Enjoy this now through 2025.*



**2009 Windy Oaks Estate Limited Release Wild Yeast Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Shy, but welcoming bouquet of wild berries, marzipan and vanilla with a hint of "wet dog." Polished and charming, with good*

*freshness, featuring mid weight flavors of black cherry and black raspberry. The wine's youthful character reminds one of a just released wine. Impressive balance. Drink now to 2025.*

**2010 Windy Oaks Estate Limited Release Wild Yeast Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The bouquet speaks of herbs, vegetation, turned earth, sandalwood and spice. Light to mid weight flavors of red cherry and cranberry. The tannins supersede the fruit sap. Lacks interest and intensity and reflective of this vintage. Drink up.*

**2006 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Revealing bouquet of cherry jam, spice, brown sugar and brioche. Tasty cherry core backed by integrated tannins, displaying good acid verve and a decent finish. A nicely aged, comforting Pinot. Drink now to 2020.*

**2007 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is a compatible marriage of cherry and sous-bois aromas. Fresh and juicy on the palate, with flavors of cherry, strawberry and cranberry in a mid weight style with modest persistent tannins and a compliment of oak in the background. Aging beautifully. Drink now to 2022.*

**2010 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Schultze Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. The fruit is faded, replaced with nutty oak bouquet and a slight oxidized note of sherry. Light in weight and lacking enthusiasm, this wine features flavors of red cherry and cranberry framed by gentle tannins. This wine will not improve with further aging and is a victim of the vintage. Drink up.*

#### **Final impressions after this retrospective tasting of aged California Pinot Noirs:**

1. Vintage differences become more apparent as Pinot Noir ages.
2. Although alcohol is a preservative, it can intrude on an aged wine as fruit fades. In the case of the wines tasted in this review, the wines were in balance and alcohol never reared its head with aging.
3. There are more disappointments than epiphanies in aged California Pinot Noir generally.
4. Well-aged Pinot Noir can surprise when first opened, but tend to fade over time and may not provide a special drinking experience over the course of a meal.
5. Oak creep can be evident in Pinot Noir over time, tending to be more apparent as fruit fades in proportion.
6. Faults or defects can be more apparent in wines over time.
7. 47% of the Pinot Noirs tasted that were ten years or less out were still drinking exceptionally well and should last through the mid or long term.
8. 19% of the Pinot Noirs tasted that were ten years or less out were still enjoyable but should be drunk in the short term.
9. 24% of the Pinot Noirs tasted that were ten years or less out were drinkable or even enjoyable now but should be consumed now.
10. 10% of the Pinot Noirs suffered decrepitude or were defective. There no instances of cork taint but a few wines had oxidized characters.
11. Pinot Noirs that were tasted beyond ten years of age are at or near the precipice.
12. Speaking in general terms with few exceptions, I would not cellar most California Pinot Noir beyond 5 to 7 years and certainly not beyond 10 years unless you like to gamble or find interest in well-aged characters.

13. No one can accurately predict a Pinot Noir's apogee. As winemaker Zelma Long noted, "The truth of wine aging is that it is unknown, unstudied, poorly understood and poorly predicted." Do not be encumbered by worrisome thoughts about how long to cellar a domestic Pinot Noir. Just pop the cork when you feel like drinking a wine. It is the gospel truth that it is better to drink a domestic Pinot Noir too early than too late. **Better to revel in the joy of youthfulness than the decrepitude of old age.**

# Unprecedented Tasting of Well-Aged California Pinot Noirs: Blake Brown Reports

Blake Brown is a Pinot Noir enthusiast with an excellent palate and an eye for aged Pinot Noir. Recently, a friend of his had a number of well-aged Pinot Noirs to open, and along with his winemaker partner, hosted an evening in their home for this special happening. Fourteen attendees enjoyed food catered from the local Hitching Post Restaurant by Frank Ostini, who also participated in the tasting. Burt Williams attended along with six other prominent winemakers from the Santa Barbara County area.

The dinner featured 12 Williams Selyem Pinot Noirs from 1987-1997, and 9 Pinot Noirs from 1954-1973 by Inglenook, BV, Charles Krug, Hanzell and Martini. The tasting notes to follow are by Blake Brown who kindly agreed to share his experience.

## First Flight

**1987 Williams Selyem Sonoma County Pinot Noir** *"This blend contained fruit from the little known Barnes Road Vineyard (? exact name) that was never vineyard designated. The color was still free from an effects of aging. The nose had a really inviting spice red fruit character that continued over to the taste profile along with some burnt toast, smoke and cola notes. As opposed to a quick hit and out, this wine kept getting better and better in the glass. The lovely texture was soft and the wine had enough stuff to stay on at the end. Burt said he was quite surprised at how well this entry level Pinot Noir showed. It was one of my favorite wines of the night as well as the favorite of others."*

**1988 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** *"50% Russian River Valley and 50% Sonoma Coast grapes. The aromatics had some leather, cedar and earthy notes almost suggestive of Brett that gave way to wonderful, slightly sweet and lightly spiced red cherry. The wine was light and easy on the palate and on its own, a pleasant drink and not flawed."*

**1990 Williams Selyem Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** *"Burt mentioned that this was a strange vintage that followed a few seasons of drought even though there had been some rain in late 1989. He felt this wine did not have as much going for it in comparison to all of the consistently great Pinot Noirs from this vineyard first planted in 1969. Burt commented that this was his best vineyard. This was a very good wine showing little signs of aging in the color or taste. It gave up wonderful clove-enriched cranberry and cherry fruit that was a bit briery. This bottle also got better with time, and raspberry and red cherry came in late to embellish the experience. This wine was light and easy, silky smooth, and preferred by some attendees as wine of the night."*

**1991 Williams Selyem Olivet Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** *"Corked."*

**1992 Williams Selyem Allen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** *"Amazingly youthful from its dark red purple color on. The wine was lively, energetic and beautifully balanced. It had delicious spicy red and black fruit notes with black raspberry being most prominent. Round and seamless, with a fantastic mouthfeel and length contributing to the greatness of this wine. My #1 wine of the night as I vacillated between this and the 1987 when it came time to declare. A winner among many winners."*

**1993 Williams Selyem Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** *"This was a strange bottle for me. After noticing the brown rim around the edge, the nose had a really offensive veggie character. The taste, however, would have nothing of it, and only gave pure pleasure. The wine was full-bodied and full of tasty mature red fruit that just kept unfolding. Past mid palate, there was more coming in and hanging on for a grand climax. I kept going back to check if the nose would blow off, and it never did even a smidgen. I forgot about the nose and drank it."*

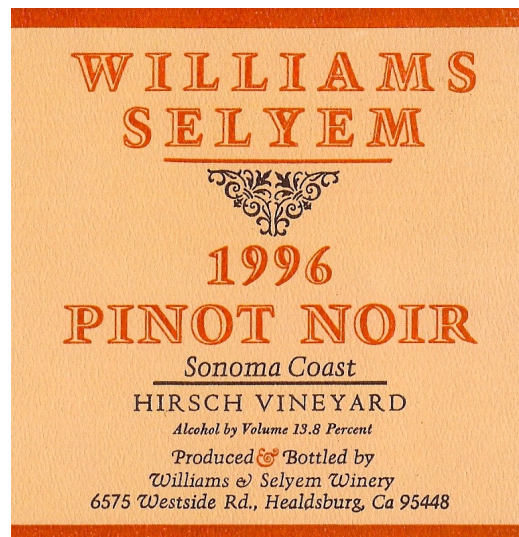
## Second Flight

**1993 Williams Selyem Olivet Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** *“The color was a light to medium red, and the nose offered very pleasant spicy red and black cherry fruit. The Williams Selyem wines are all hallmarked by a wonderful mouthfeel and this one followed suit. A very mellow and graceful wine with enough goodness to please.”*

**1994 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** *“This wine was composed of fruit from the south Sonoma Coast vineyards, Hirsch Vineyard and Summa Vineyard. Dark red in color, this wine still had a youthful vitality and started off in a big way with a serious dollop of spice and then bright red fruit. More spice built on more spice, more than I can ever remember in any of the past Williams Selyem Pinot Noirs I have tasted although a spicy characteristic is certainly one of the common threads. Fresh red fruit stood out as well as the silky soft texture. I loved this bottle and am happy to have some in my cellar.”*

**1995 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** *“Still youthful medium red color. The aromatics were simply magnificent. There was an abundance of cola and spice to support the red raspberry, red cherry and blueberry fruit. It had lovely balance, feel and length. A great bottle.”*

**1996 Williams Selyem Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** *“Another still youthful wine with so much going on. It was just perfect in weight, fruit and spice compliments, feel and finish. There was a perfect blend of strawberry, red raspberry and red cherry all easily identified and hanging in there all the way to the back end. The soft and smooth texture added to the enjoyment of the tastiness. Definitely one of my favorite wines of the night.”*



**1997 Williams Selyem Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** *“Medium dark red color. Talc and baking spices accent the red and black cherry with a strong hint of maraschino as well. There was a distinct difference between this and the 1996 Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir. Both were super good yet different. This bottle was in beautiful balance and had a classic silky texture as well as a sustained finish.”*

**1997 Williams Selyem Sonoma County Pinot Noir** *“This was composed of a healthy percentage of fruit from the Summa Vineyard. The nose had an uncharacteristic mustiness that did not dissipate over time. Fortunately, there was none of this in the taste profile that was redolent of fresh and ripe red and black fruits with black cherry being most prevalent. My first thought about the mustiness was sulfur but Burt mentioned several times he used very little sulfur dioxide in his wines, so I avoided the question and enjoyed the wine’s tastiness.”*

## Third Flight

Blake noted, “As with all of the older wines that followed, there is something to be said about the magnificence of these wines in their own right. One must have a greater appreciation for what that translates to and not expect the wines to be what we are so accustomed to in wines that are much younger.”

**1954 Inglenook Napa Valley Pinot Noir** *“This vintage marked the 75th anniversary of the winery and was made during the years of John Daniel who during the celebration announced the motto, ‘Pride, not Profit.’ This bottle showed its maturity with an aged brown purple color as well as almost beyond tertiary dried red and dark fruit accented with coffee and dark chocolate notes. I was proud to have a sip of this wine.”*



**1965 Beaulieu Vineyard “Beaumont” Napa Valley Pinot Noir** *“I assumed this was made by the iconic André Tchelistcheff as he did not retire until 1973. The wine was almost maple in color, had a considerable amount of earthiness along with tertiary flavors of dried prunes and figs.”*

**1965 Charles Krug Peter Mondavi Family Napa Valley Pinot Noir** *“I did not notice the label to see if this came from their vineyards in Carneros, but I suspect it was since that was their primary if not solo source of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in those days. This bottle was quite aged from the color and taste profile that reminded me of a dry version of Welch’s grape juice commonly used for communion when I was a child.”*

**1965 Hanzell Vineyards Sonoma Pinot Noir** *“This was the year that the Zellerback family sold their winery to the Day family, so I presume it was made by the original owner’s winemaker, Brad Webb. The vines were first planted in 1954 using a Martin Ray selection, with the fruit first vinified in 1957. The wine had an impressive nose that suggested anything other than over the hill and out. The fruit was more dried cranberry and cherry with a bit of sweetness. By mid palate, the fruit started to dissipate and with a few minutes, it just disappeared and some funky stuff took over. At least I got an early nice dose.”*

**1966 Louis M. Martini Special Selection California Mountain Pinot Noir** *“The nose was mindful of Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, with spice and pepper notes and a touch of blueberry. It would have been a major stretch to call it Pinot Noir in a blind tasting.”*

## Fourth Flight

**1968 Beaulieu Vineyards “Beaumont” Napa Valley Pinot Noir** *“This wine had some briery and metallic characters that stood out in the aroma and taste. The fruit was more on the wild side with dried blackberry and black raspberry. The wine finished with more of the metallic notes.”*

**1969 Beaulieu Vineyards “Beaumont” Napa Valley Pinot Noir** *“More of the metallic, steely notes were apparent like in the 1968 bottling. Also noted, were chocolate and coffee-laden and dried dark fruit.”*

**1969 Louis M. Martini Special Selection California Mountain Pinot Noir** *“A better offering than the previously tasted 1966 vintage. More expansive with an immense amount of aromatics and taste. Decent tertiary plum, black cherry and blackberry fruit stood out.”*

**1973 Charles Krug Peter Mondavi Family Napa Valley Pinot Noir** *“The youngster of the last nine wines and it had more going for it than most of the others. The wine still showed its age in the color and taste, but gave up smoke-inundated and dried black currant, black cherry and cranberry fruit holding on for a longer finish.”*



Blake's final comments. *"There were at least 6 of the 12 bottles of Williams Selyem Pinot Noir that shined ever so brightly and 3 more that on their own would have stood up and been counted in any setting. To have Burt at the table was an added treat and for some of us, it provided a invaluable dialogue for education and edification.*

# Pinot Briefs

**Best Place to View Eclipse** The area around Salem, Oregon, is one of the best places in the United States to view The Great American Eclipse on August 21, 2017. For about two minutes, the sky will go dark and stars will be visible at 10:17 a.m.. Brooks Winery in the Eola-Amity Hills is holding a eclipse part to celebrate this event. Ethan Siegel, a theoretical astrophysicist and local Portland legend will be in attendance overnight and will share his knowledge about the stars. There are two options: a Sunny Day Package featuring yoga in morning, brunch, wine, a talk by Ethan, eclipse viewing and lunch by Chef Abby (families welcome) or the Starry Night Package featuring everything in the Sunny Day Package plus overnight camping the night before, live music, a BBQ, wine and a star talk with Ethan. Tickets must be purchased in advance and early bird pricing ends February 28, 2017. View all details at [www.brookswine.com/eclipse/](http://www.brookswine.com/eclipse/).

**SLH Gala XI** Tickets are on sale for the Santa Lucia Highlands Annual Gala taking place from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 20, 2017, at Mer Soleil Winery in Salinas.. The Gala is a strolling wine tasting through the barrel cellar of Mer Soleil, a venue not usually open to the public. Guests will be able to sample limited release wines from the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA, most poured by the vintners. Participating wineries include many of your Pinot Noir producing favorites like August West, Belle Glos, Bernardus, Black Kite, Hahn Family Wines, Kosta Browne, Loring, Lucia, Manzoni, Morgan, Pisoni, Roar, Siduri, Talbott, Testarossa, and Wrath. Gourmet bites will be provided from several of the region's best chefs and restaurants. A big bottle benefit silent auction, live music and other surprises round out the day. Admission tickets are \$120 per person and are available online at [www.santaluciahighlands.eventbrite.com](http://www.santaluciahighlands.eventbrite.com). A limited number of Early Admission tickets are \$150 per person that allow entrance at 11:00 a.m. guaranteeing access to rare wines, library releases and new gems from SLH vintners.



**SLO Wine Country “Sip in SLO” Tasting Pass Program** San Luis Obispo (SLO) Wine Country has announced the launch of “Sip in SLO,” a new tasting pass program from the months of February and March (the promotion will also return later this year for November and December). After you purchase a pass at [www.SLOWine.com](http://www.SLOWine.com) for \$40, pass holders can enjoy tastings at four wineries of their choice, selected from among 16 different participating tasting rooms across the region. Select participating wineries will also offer pass holders special discounts on wine purchases. Several of your favorite Pinot Noir producers are participating including Cutruzzola Vineyards, Laetitia Vineyard & Winery, Sinor-LaVallee Wine Company and Talley Vineyards. On a related note, Alaska Airlines will start offering direct flights between San Luis Obispo and Seattle on April 13, 2017 and will also allow passengers to ship one case of wine back to Seattle free as part of the airline’s “Wine Flies Free” program.

**Davis Family Vineyards Celebrates 20th Anniversary Vintage** A former PinotFile “Winery of the Year,” Davis Family Vineyards is now offering barrel futures early this year, Barrel tasting is hosted the first two weekends in March when the Russian River Valley opens up barrels from the 2015 and 2016 vintages to taste and purchase at low prices. Unfortunately, production was down with the 2015 and 2016 vintages, so many were shut out. This year members of mailing list receive offers of the 2017 vintage a full month before Barrel Tasting in March giving them more opportunity to buy futures before they are gone. The wines will be

bottled later this year and will be ready for pickup or shipping in March 2018. If you are not a member of the mailing list, contact Annie Rambo at [annie@daviswines.com](mailto:annie@daviswines.com) or all toll free at 866-338-9463.

**Super Bowl Beverage Alcohol Consumption** The amount of beverage alcohol consumed each year around the Super Bowl is astonishing. Wine is way overshadowed by beer.



**2015 Oregon Vineyard & Winery Census Report** Southern Oregon University Research Center (SOUTCE) released its 2015 Oregon Vineyard and Winery Census Report in mid 2016. Of interest to Pinot Noir enthusiasts is that Pinot Noir leads all varieties with 62.2 percent of planted acreage (17,146 acres). Pinot Noir production was a leading combined North and South Willamette Valley total of 41,832 tons or 67.7 percent in 2015. The total number of vineyards is 1,052, with about 60% or 606 located in the North Willamette Valley and 10% or 109 located in the South Willamette Valley. Total vineyard acreage is 28,033. There were a total of 702 wineries in Oregon, an increase from 676 in 2014. Total sales in 2015 were 3,093,000 cases equaling \$470,650,919, an increase of 8.5 percent over 2014. Canada remained Oregon's largest export market. For all statistics, visit [www.inside.sou.edu/research/winecensus.html](http://www.inside.sou.edu/research/winecensus.html).

**2017 Wine Extraordinaire** Now in its 36th year, the Orange County Wine Society (California) sponsored event raises scholarship funds for students studying enology, viticulture and culinary arts in several California colleges and universities. The event will be held at the OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa, on Sunday, March 26, 2017, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and features more than 85 wineries pouring samples to 1,000 attendees. Local restaurants provide samples, and there is a drawing for fine wines and a silent auction. For further details, visit [www.WineExtra.org](http://www.WineExtra.org).

**Binge Drinking Dangerous to Cardiovascular Health** Many of us have binged on alcohol more times than we want to admit when we were young, and regretted it the next day. Once the hangover is over, however, we quickly forget the pain and are oblivious to the long term consequences. A new study published in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* (pre-publication 2017) was critiqued by the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research. The publication was a review of the effects of binge drinking on the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD). It clearly showed that people who binge drink, however it is defined, tend to be at increased risk for pre-hypertension, hypertension, myocardial infarction (heart attack), stroke and cardiac arrhythmias in middle-aged and older adults Binge drinking may also have adverse CVD effects in young adults, aged 18-30. The mechanisms responsible are not completely understood but evidence suggests binge drinking may induce oxidative stress and vascular injury and lead to atherogenic changes (arteriosclerotic vascular disease). These adverse health outcomes are in addition to many other adverse health effects and risk from violence and accidents to the drinker and to others. This review and additional research results indicate that episodic heavy drinking, or binge drinking, has adverse influences on many health outcomes, including the risk of CVD. Read the full critique at [www.bu.edu/alcohol-forum/critique-196](http://www.bu.edu/alcohol-forum/critique-196).