



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*Pinot Noir
is
Transformational*

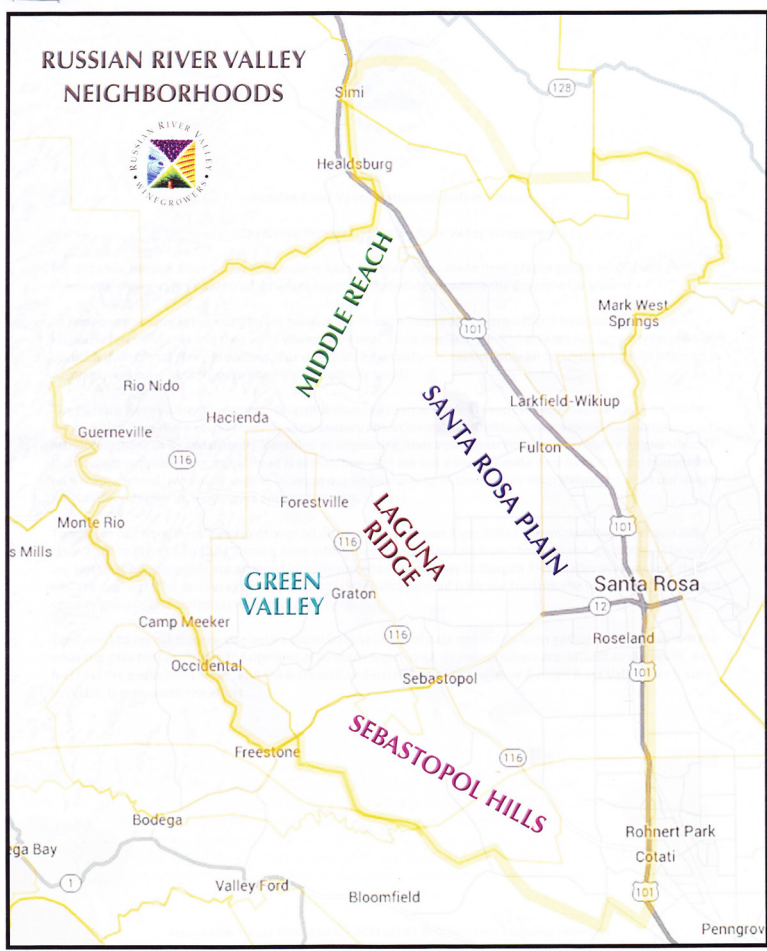
Sebastopol Hills : Russian River Valley's Southernmost Pearl for Pinot Noir

Most visitors to the Russian River Valley congregate in three of the seven neighborhood sub regions of the Russian River Valley including the Middle Reach, the Santa Rosa Plain and the Laguna Ridge, drawn by the concentration of notable wineries in these areas. Less widely recognized among visitors is that many of these wineries reach beyond their own neighborhood to produce Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the other four main Russian River Valley sub regions including the Sebastopol Hills, Green Valley, Freestone and Windsor Hills.



When the Russian River Valley appellation was established in 1983, the amount of Pinot Noir acreage was very small, and the notion that Pinot Noir made from grapes grown in the Russian River Valley expressed different nuances depending on where they were grown within the vast Russian River Valley appellation was not yet realized. As vineyard acreage increased, names for the sub regions assumed common usage. The Middle Reach was the area along the Russian River south of Healdsburg; the Santa Rosa Plain was a broad flood plane that once was the Laguna de Santa Rosa, a series of freshwater lakes that drained the valley from Cotati north to the Russian River; Green Valley became its own appellation also in 1983 as a very cool, foggy

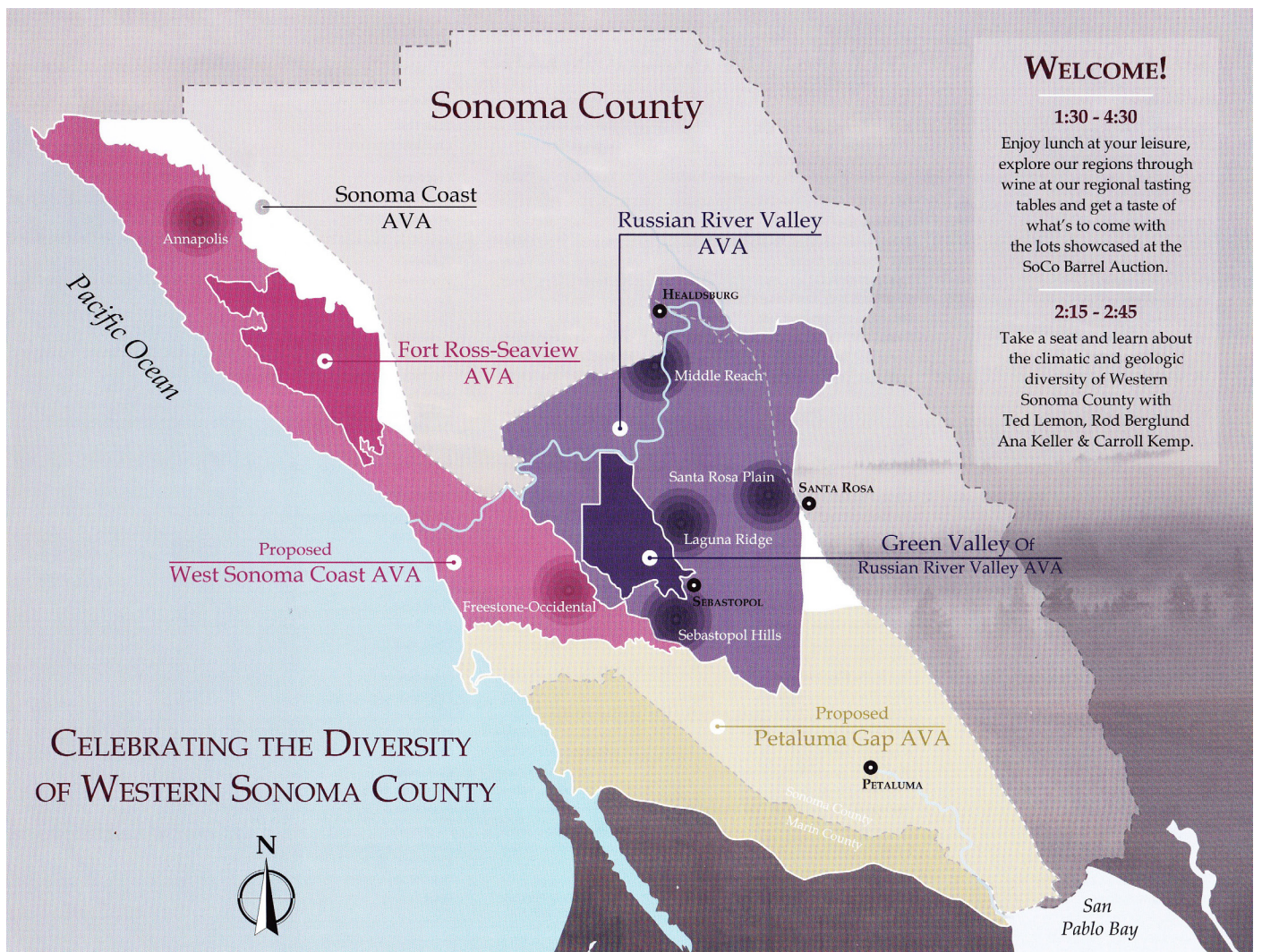
subregion in the southwest corner of the Russian River Valley; and the Laguna Ridge was a north to south line of hills situated between the Santa Rosa Plain to the East and Green Valley to the West.



With the expansion of the Russian River Valley appellation in October of 2005, Sebastopol Hills was added as a sub region, and the neighborhoods of Freestone and Windsor Hills have been identified. These sub regions are not determined to receive an appellation designation, but rather represent different neighborhoods with distinctive microclimates and characteristic fruit profiles analogous to the villages of the Cote d’Or. The wines from each sub region carry an overall defining character of the Russian River Valley appellation as a whole, but each sub region offers variations on that theme, particularly for Pinot Noir, since the grape is transparent and a site can be tasted through the wine.

In 2014, the Russian River Valley Winegrowers Association organized a Neighborhood Initiative and Tasting Panel to determine if it was possible to identify what particular sub region Russian River Valley Pinot Noir came from. In this ongoing research study, Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is being evaluated for certain sensory characteristics derived from the grapes (linking them to a subregion) rather than the winemaking. Over a period of many years it is hoped that patterns will emerge to define the various neighborhoods by the similarities expressed in the wines.

One particular sub region of the Russian River Valley began to emerge from the mid 1990s as a “pearl” of the appellation because of the consistent quality of the Pinot Noir originating there and the realization among growers that this is one of the few promised lands for Pinot Noir in California. Located south of the small town of Sebastopol, the Sebastopol Hills has been described by John Winthrop Haeger as follows: “A triangular land of mostly northeast and southwest oriented ridges on the lee side of a transverse ridge that separates the Russian River Valley from the Petaluma Gap.” The map below from a West of West event shows the outline of the Petaluma Gap region, proposed Petaluma Gap appellation (that overlaps the Sebastopol Hills), and the proximity of the Sebastopol Hills.



Historically, Sebastopol Hills was an area dedicated solely to Gravenstein apple growing, but apple orchards have now been replaced by vineyards. According to John Winthrop Haeger - <http://m.sfgate.com/wine/article/Sebastopol-s-hilly-new-haven-for-Pinot-Noir-3197929.php>, the first tiny vineyard in the sub region, barely three-quarters of an acre, was planted to Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer and field blends in 1972 by a professor at Santa Rosa Junior College as a backyard project. New owners later renovated the 1972 vineyard, located near the intersection of Burnside and Sexton roads, and converted it to Pinot Noir.

I spoke with apple grower Randy Peters who was most likely the first to exploit the Sebastopol Hills sub region for premium winegrowing. He had been leasing half of his father-in-law Tom Mukaida's apple orchard beginning in 1976. When he removed some old apple trees, he planted 2 acres of Chardonnay in 1984 that became **Peters Vineyard**. In 1986 he added Pinot Noir, initially planting Pommard and Wädenswil, the only Pinot Noir clones available at the time, and followed with additional plantings including Pommard, Dijon 115 and 777 at two-year intervals until he reached 36 acres in 1996. Initially, there was no interest among wineries in purchasing the grapes because of the southerly location. Gallo had developed the Frei Ranch seven miles to the north and showed interest in the grapes, particularly when Randy told them that apples ripened early in his ranch. Randy supplied both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to Gallo through 1998, before acquiring a contract with Papapietro Perry. Subsequently, he has also sold Pinot Noir grapes to Kokomo, Jigar, Anthill Farms and the Peters Vineyard is synonymous with ultra premium Pinot Noir wines.

In 1994, Ross and Jennifer Halleck planted a 1-acre backyard Pinot Noir vineyard nearby named **Halleck Vineyard**. The following year, the noted western Sonoma County winegrower, Warren Dutton, was instrumental in encouraging John Balletto to plant in this relatively untested area of the Russian River Valley and **Burnside Road Vineyard** was established. Many other Pinot Noir plantings were to follow in the 1990s including, Ted Klopp (**Thorn Ridge Vineyard**, 1995), Stephen and Lynda Kanzler (**Kanzler Vineyard**, 1996), David Umino (**Umino Vineyard**, 1996), Dutton family (**Freestone Hill Vineyard**, 1996 and 1997), John Balletto (**Emerson**

Block, 1997), Lee Martinelli family (**Bondi Home Ranch Water Trough Vineyard**, 1997), Jim Pratt (**Pratt Sexton Road Vineyard**, 1997), Merry Edwards (**Meredith Estate**, 1998), Rick and Diane DuNah (**DuNah Vineyard**, 1998), Mame Coggan and Debbie Friedenber (**Sonatera Vineyard**, 1998), Eric Neal (**Mes Filles Vineyard**, 1998), and Tom and Rebecca Kisaichi, (**Maboroshi Estate Vineyard**, 1999).

Spurred by the popularity of Pinot Noir, the Sebastopol Hills had a number of significant vineyard plantings in the 2000s, including **Suacci Family Vineyard** (2001), **Jenkins Ranch** (early 2000s), Ted Lemon's **The Pivot Vineyard** (2004), **English Hill Vineyard** (2005), and Balletto's **Mary's Vineyard** (2006), **Sexton Hill Vineyard** (2009), **Falstaff Road Vineyard** (2009) and **Cider Ridge Vineyard** (2010). Other Pinot Noir vineyards in the Sebastopol Hills area include **Bella-Vigna**, **Carinalli-Ross Ranch**, **Dutton-Wat**, **Freestone Hill**, **Hervey**, **Jennifer's**, **Pearlessence**, **Pennacchio**, **Raymondo**, **Rayhill**, **Rice-Spivak**, **Petersen**, **Sofia's** and **Watertrough**. A Google map image of Sebastopol Hills vineyards is below.



Initially grapes from the Sebastopol Hills were used in blends. Haeger said that the first commercial wine fashioned primarily from Sebastopol grapes was the 1998 Flowers Sonoma Coast Cuvée, made from grapes primarily from a Pratt Vineyard. A year later, winemaker Fred Scherrer bought Halleck's first commercially viable crop, blended with lots from Hirsch Vineyard, and crafted a Sonoma Coast blend. Vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs soon followed. Some of Ted Klopp's first harvests at Thorn Ridge went to Scott Rich, who made vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs under his Talisman label. In 2002, the Hallecks launched their eponymous label, with wines first produced by Greg La Follette and later Rick Davis. The DuNahs followed in 2003 with their first estate grown DuNah Vineyard Pinot Noir, and Balletto made its first vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Sebastopol Hills fruit in 2007.

The Sebastopol Hills is actually part of both the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast appellations with a few vineyards also in the Green Valley appellations (see map below). Sebastopol Hills is often referred to as part of the West Sonoma Coast that is not a true appellation but a marketing designation of the West Sonoma Coast Vintners. When the proposed Petaluma Gap appellation is approved, the more southern plantings will be in this appellation as well. Wineries bottling wines from the Sebastopol Hills do not put this sub region on the front labels since Sebastopol Hills is not an appellation, and use a Russian River Valley or Sonoma Coast appellation designation. Consumers must find it confusing and need to be well informed to know that a vineyard-designated Pinot Noir originated from grapes grown in the Sebastopol Hills sub region of the Russian River Valley. Regrettably, pinotphiles often fail to visit this beautiful area because there is only a few tasting opportunities among the many vineyards.



Although the boundaries of the Sebastopol Hills is not defined, according to www.everyvine.com, Sebastopol Hills makes up only 14,544 acres of the 169,029-acre Russian River Valley appellation. There are 859 planted vineyard acres among about 52 vineyards - 5.7% of the total Sebastopol Hills acreage. Ted Lemon's Littorai estate is the only winemaking facility in the sub region. Elevations range from 118 to 646 feet with an average of 360 feet. Ground water availability is generally good.

Sebastopol Hills is the coolest region of the Russian River Valley, with gently rolling hills exposed to heavy summer fog intrusions from the adjacent Petaluma Gap, particularly the more southern grape plantings and those vineyards at lower elevations. Mid day heat is tempered by winds from the Petaluma Gap and evening and early mornings remain a little warmer than other nearby vineyards in the Russian River Valley. This sub region has 2707 growing degree days with temperatures ranging from 48°F to 77.3°F with a median of 62.6°F. The moderate peak temperatures ensure good acidity in the wines. Annual rainfall is 43.1 inches with 6.03 inches during the growing season.

The soils are generally Goldridge sandy loam, a unique soil type not unique to the Sebastopol Hills but very prevalent as it is in the adjacent Green Valley. It is derived from the remains of an ancient inland sea that slowly emptied into the Pacific Ocean three to five million years ago. Ted Lemon of Littorai told me, "There is virtually no rock in Gold Ridge loam. Only the parent material, the Wilson Grove formation, that is, sandstones, might where sufficiently compressed by considered 'rock.' In winter, Gold Ridge is highly permeable and easily worked. The clay content of the subsoil can hold moisture for a long time. In summer, Gold Ridge soil basically turns to concrete unless you cultivate it and in that case it turns into a very fine powder. With some attention and care, it is a wonderful soil for dry farming grapes." The Goldridge soil has low fertility allowing grapes to be

farmed initially in a low vigor milieu and adjusted as necessary with water and nutrition to achieve superb Pinot Noir quality.

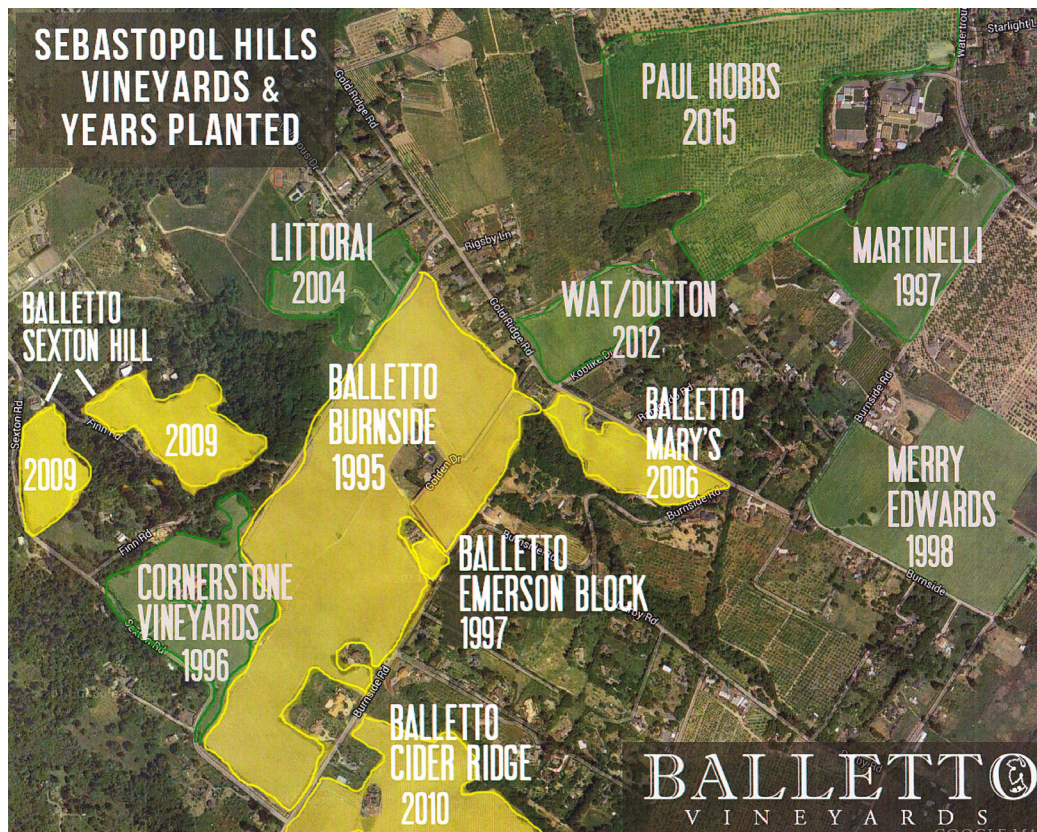
The sensory characteristics of Pinot Noir from the Sebastopol Hills are not well defined. Winemakers have pointed out a few generalizations: ripe phenolics at relatively low Brix, good natural acidity, fine-grain tannins, typically earth, minerality and savory characters dominate, darker fruits are the rule, warm spice (nutmeg, clove) and floral notes common.

Notable wineries that either grow or have sourced grapes from vineyards in the Sebastopol Hills include Anthill Farms, A.P. Vin, Balletto, Banshee Wines, Bailiwick, Boheme, C. Donnatello, Capiaux Cellars, Cattleya, Chasseur, COBB, De Loach, Dutton-Goldfield, Eric Kent, Ernest Vineyards, Failla, Freeman Vineyard & Winery, Halleck Vineyard, Hartford Court, Inman Family, J Vineyards & Winery, Jigar, Kanzler, Kosta Brown, La Follette Wines, La Pitchoune, Landmark, LaRue, Littorai, Lynmar, MacPhail, MacRostie, Merry Edwards, Pali Wine Co., Papapietro Perry, Patz & Hall, Pellegrini, Rhys, Rivers-Marie, Siduri, Soliste, Spell Estate, Suacci Carciere, Talisman, Vaughn Duffy, Von Holt, W.H. Smith, Withers, and Zepaltas.

I recently visited three wineries either located in the Sebastopol Hills (Halleck Vineyard and Kanzler Vineyards) or have significant vineyard holdings in the Sebastopol Hills (Balletto Vineyards). Here is background information on each winery and the results of my tastings.

Balletto Vineyards

John Balletto is a man of the earth, a farmer with a firm handshake and an endearing personality. He started farming vegetables in Sonoma County at the age of 17 in 1977 following the untimely death of his father from cancer. John started with \$200 and 4 acres of land surrounding the family home. Along with his spouse Terri, he grew the family vegetable farming business into the largest in Northern California at its peak (over 700 acres). However, a number of factors played out including disastrous El Nino weather events that eventually made vegetable farming in Sonoma County unprofitable and John successfully transitioned to wine grape growing beginning in 1995. It is a remarkable story of fortitude that could make for an inspirational tale on its own.



With the assistance of Cecile DeLoach, he planted Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay in 1995 in the Santa Rosa Plain and expanded his plantings over the subsequent years. Today, the Balletto family has 700 vineyard acres spread over 18 different ranches in the Russian River Valley including 280 acres in western Sebastopol. More than 20 different clones of Pinot Noir are planted. The map above shows Balletto Estate vineyards in the Sebastopol Hills sub region of the Russian River Valley.

Balletto Vineyards is located at 5700 Occidental Road in Santa Rosa, a property that shares its western edges with the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetland habitat that is preserved lands. The first Balletto Vineyards wines were released in 2001 (1,000 cases), produced at the site of the current winery that had been converted from the vegetable farm's produce packaging and shipping building with its ideal 12-inch-thick walls. Today, Balletto Vineyards is one of the few 100 percent estate grown and bottled producers in the Russian River Valley.

Winemaker Anthony Beckman started at Balletto Vineyards as an enologist in 2007 and was promoted to winemaker two years later. His adept winemaking has pushed the quality of Balletto wines and many accolades have been forthcoming from wine competitions, wine critics and the wine press.

Most of the grapes from the Balletto vineyards is sold to renowned Sonoma County winemakers, with the top 10 percent of the fruit reserved for Balletto Vineyards' bottlings. Annual case production of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay has gradually increased over the years along with an expanding portfolio of single-vineyard Pinot Noir wines from a cluster of sites in the Sebastopol Hills including Burnside Road, Cider Ridge and Sexton Hill, and the estate BCD Vineyard and Winery Block Vineyard in the Santa Rosa Plain sub region of the Russian River Valley. Total wine production, including sparkling wine, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Rosé, Syrah and Zinfandel total 20,000 cases. A map of Balletto vineyard sites is below.



As a testament to the Balletto family's integrity, more than a dozen employees have worked with John and Terri Balletto for 20 or more years, and 18 families reside in local housing built and subsidized by the Ballettos. As a sign of commitment to employees, a regulation-sized "Field of Dreams" baseball field was built at Occidental Road Vineyard at the request of Balletto's vineyard workers as a place they could play and practice.

In 2010, the Ballettos were awarded the Sonoma County Farm Bureau Family of the Year. Photo below shows Terri and John Balletto along with daughters Caterina and Jacqueline.



The Balletto Vineyards tasting room is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.. The sensibly priced wines are also distributed to fine retailers and sold on the website at www.ballettovineyards.com. The 2012 sparkling wine and 2016 rosé are currently available while the 2015 Pinot Noirs are fall 2017 releases with the BCD and Sexton Hill in pre-release. Eight Pinot Noirs are currently produced: 5 vineyard designates, an 18 Barrel reserve, an Estate bottling and a Russian River Valley blend.

I recently visited the winery and tasted with owner John Balletto and winemaker Anthony Beckman.

2013 Balletto Vineyards Brut Rosé Russian River Valley Sparkling Wine *Inviting bead, with plenty of Pinot Noir character. Dry with a quenching finish driven by both yeast and fruit notes. 92.*

2016 Balletto Vineyards Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir See review in article on Rosé wines later in this issue. **92.**



2015 Balletto Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 3,200 cases, pH 3.63, TA 0.59, \$29. The winery's flagship wine and a consistent Gold Medal winner. In 2015, some vineyards contributing to this wine yielded less than 1 ton per acre. Aged in French oak barrels, 32% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose leads with aromas of Bing cherry, rhubarb and spice. Cherry flavor driven, this mid weight wine is easy going with modest tannins, a compliment of oak in the background and noticeable black cherry goodness on the finish. 89-90.*

2015 Balletto Vineyards Winery Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir First produced in 2007, this wine is sourced from a special block adjacent the winery that stands out. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Exuberant aromas of dark strawberry, cherry and mocha are inviting. A lovely wine in the mouth, with noticeable dark berry fruits that impress on entry, mid palate and finish. Fine-grain fruit tannins provide support and juicy acidity stokes the bright and persistent finish. 92-93.*

2015 Balletto BCD Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$44. Wine club exclusive, Gold Medal at 2016 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. The site of the first Pinot Noir planting by Balletto, originally as a partnership between Balletto (B), Carlson (C) and DeLoach (D). The warmest Pinot Noir site among Balletto estate vineyards. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Rich with dark fruits and savory overtones, this full-bodied wine offers a hedonistic load of sappy blackberry and black raspberry flavors, but is not jammy. Very silky on the palate, with nicely integrated oak support and some finishing length. 91-92.*

2015 Balletto Sexton Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$44. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of dark red fruits, rose petal and spice. Middleweight in style, with fruit flavors of black raspberry and black cherry framed but structured fruit tannins that support rather than impose. Nicely balanced with an intensely fruity finish that leaves a smile. 92-93.*

Balletto Vineyards wines tasted in my usual extensive fashion at my home office after my winery visit.

2015 Balletto Sexton Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, 500 cases, \$44. Indigenous yeast fermentation, aged in French oak barrels, 38% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of purple grape, raspberry coulis lead off. Sleek and juicy, with flavors of oak-kissed black raspberry, boysenberry and ollaliberry. Reserved tannins, welcome acidity, and a pleasing but not intense finish. 92.*

2015 Balletto Burnside Road Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.59, 580 cases. Indigenous yeast fermentation in six-ton open top fermenters, aged in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Deep aromas of cherry and allspice. Quite charming in the mouth, with a mid weight, juicy core of earth-kissed black cherry fruit. Polished, with firm tannins and some finishing length. Quite typical of the Sebastopol Hills. 92.*

2015 Balletto Burnside Road Emerson Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 140 cases. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is very charming, featuring aromas of black cherry, spice, tobacco smoke, dark chocolate and floral goodness. Mid weight plus in style, offering a haunting core of black cherry fruit with a minerality that is quite apparent. Firm tannins make for a slightly brutish wine, but in a good way. 93.*



2015 Balletto Winery Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.51, TA 0.60, 575 cases. Indigenous yeast fermentation and aged in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of dark red and purple fruits, spice and earthy flora segue into a mid weight plus styled wine with vivid flavors of purple berries. Very seductive velveteen mouthfeel, perfectly ripened fruit, and an intensely fruited finish with a good cut of acidity. 93.*

2015 Balletto BCD Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.57, \$44. Indigenous yeast fermentation and aged in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate dark garnet color in the glass. This wine offers the essence of black cherry, blueberry and pomegranate fruit aromas and flavors accented with a pleasing hint of oak spice. A satiny texture and admirable harmony add to the enjoyment. 92.*



2015 Balletto Cider Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.58, 590 cases, \$42. Double Gold Medal at 2016 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. Vineyard is located 10 miles from the Pacific Ocean in the Sebastopol Hills. Vines are planted primarily to heritage selections of Pinot Noir. Indigenous yeast fermentation, aged in French oak barrels, 32% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose draws you in with aromas of dark raspberry, black cherry and pipe smoke. Mid weight in style, with vivid flavors of blackberry and black raspberry that grab hold of the mid palate with a vengeance. Satiny in texture with inviting harmony, and a very long, juicy and berry-fueled finish. You won't be able to stop at one glass with this beauty.* **94.**



2015 Balletto Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.7% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.67, 1,400 cases, \$28. Barrel fermented and aged, native yeast fermentation, 100% malolactic fermentation. Lees stirring every three weeks for first six months. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. A flamboyant wine with bright flavors of lemon, pineapple, honeysuckle and almond croissant. Very generous flavors of citrus, white peach, and pear, with well-integrated acidity. This one really aims to please and is a terrific value.* **92.**

2014 Balletto Sexton Hill Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.1% alc., 425 cases, \$38. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. An array of aromas great the drinker, including lemon curd, buttery brioche, Asian pear, waffle and blonde caramel. Nicely composed, with a flavor profile emphasizing apple with added tastes of lemon, pear and pineapple. Silky in the mouth with admirable balance.* **93.**



2014 Balletto Cider Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.1% alc., 475 cases, \$38. Gold Medal 2016 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. This vineyard is located in the Sebastopol Hills and is sustainably farmed. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of lemon oil, pineapple and subtle nutty oak. Soft, sleek and focused, with delightful citrus, white peach, apple, spice and brown butter flavors. A high-brow wine that is quite charming, leaving behind a thirst-quenching finish that urges another sip.* **94.**

Halleck Vineyard

Both Ross and Jennifer Halleck had worked with the wine industry before moving to the Sebastopol Hills of Sonoma County in 1991. Ross's marketing agency, Halleck Design Group, was founded in 1980, and assisted the Silicon Valley high tech industry as well as the Northern California wine industry.

The Hallecks planted their backyard 1-acre vineyard to Pinot Noir in 1994 with the intention of setting aside profits from the vineyard for their three sons college educations. Planted to Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777, the vineyard was first harvested for a commercial wine in 1999.

Pinot Noir offerings under the Halleck Vineyard label were expanded in the ensuing years, produced from excellent vineyards in the nearby Sebastopol area within three miles and vinified by veteran winemaker Rick Davis. In the 2014 vintage, a unique Pinot Noir was offered from Napa Valley's Kuleto Estate Vineyard, the only Pinot Noir currently produced in the Russian River Valley from Napa Valley fruit. Noted restaurateur, Pat Kuleto, is a big fan of Halleck Vineyard Pinot Noir.

The Halleck Vineyard wines are in such low production that they are not offered at public tastings and the mailing list to join the Inner Circle Wine Club is currently full. That said, many of the wines can be sampled and purchased by appointment - book online at www.halleckvineyard.com - with personal tastings paired with local artisan foods conducted by Ross in his art-filled home adjacent Halleck Vineyard that commands sweeping views of Sonoma County (plan ahead as appointments are in great demand). Lodging is also available at this idyllic setting that can be booked through Airbnb.

The winery's current releases include 2014 Hillside Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 2014 Three Sons Cuvée Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, 2014 Clone 828 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 2013 Estate Grown Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 2015 Little Sister Russian River Valley Sauvignon Blanc, and 2016 Russian River Valley Dry Gewürztraminer. A few library wines are available for sale on the website.



20% of production is sent to the finest restaurants in San Francisco (Farallon, Boulevard) and New York (Eleven Madison Avenue, Gramercy Tavern).

Education is a central theme of the Halleck's philanthropy and they have raised over \$350,000 over the past dozen years toward education through special winery events. Ross is currently collaborating with noted music artist Josh Groban, who is a fan of Halleck Vineyard Pinot Noir, in the production of a Pinot Noir, with all profits going to Groban's Find Your Light Foundation founded in 2011 and dedicated to enriching the lives of young people through arts, education and cultural awareness.

2014 Halleck Vineyard Three Sons Cuvée Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 596 cases, \$49. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of red cherry and savory herbs. Elegantly composed and quite charming in a forward drinking style, with red fruit and spice flavors. 90-91.*

2013 Halleck Vineyard The Farm Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 159 cases, \$75. Sourced from a 2-acre vineyard in the Laguna flats that is organically farmed. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Alluring aromas of rose petal, foliage, tobacco and sage. Discreetly concentrated in an elegant style with dark fruit flavors, warm spice notes, savory touches, and some finishing length. 91-92.*



2013 Halleck Vineyard Clone 828 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$65. Sourced from a vineyard located less than a mile from Halleck Estate Vineyard on Burnside Road. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Gorgeous perfume of cherry, spice and dried rose petal. Light to mid weight in style with a bright backbone of acidity. Impressive red fruit intensity considering the wine's lighter demeanor. Tight and focused, with soft tannins and a clean finish. 93-94.*

2014 Halleck Vineyard Hillside Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 414 cases, \$59. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Woodsy aromas dominant along with scents of red cherry and cranberry. Mid weight plus array of red and blue fruit flavors with an accent of warm spices and a definite minerality tone. Sinewy, fine-grain tannins and good follow through on the welcoming finish. 92-93.*



2013 Halleck Vineyard Estate Grown Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$110. Tasted from a bottle that had been opened one to weeks prior and kept under Coravin and tasted from a freshly opened bottle sampled with Coravin. *The previously opened bottle was highly aromatic with soaring scents of red fruits and spice. On the palate, it resembled a previously opened wine. The newly opened bottle had a primary nose with a brighter, fresher fruit palate. In either case, a very impressive, elegantly-styled wine.* **93-94.**

2014 Halleck Vineyard Kuleto Cuvée Napa Valley Pinot Noir 67 cases, \$62. Primarily a Wine Club offering. Pinot Noir is planted at 800 to 1,000 feet elevation to an unknown clone of Pinot Noir on Kuleto's 761 acres of rugged terrain in the mountains of Eastern Napa Valley. Planting began in 1993. Bill Foley purchased Kuleto in 2009. This wine includes some Halleck Vineyard fruit but the 2015 vintage will be 100% Kuleto fruit. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of fertile earth, mushroom and tutti-fruitti lead to a well-structured, mid weight offering featuring flavors of purple grape and black raspberry in a unique, rather rustic, earthy and savory style. I only had a rather brief encounter with this wine so I did not score it. Not surprisingly, it is a completely different wine as far as aromatics and flavors than the other Halleck Vineyard Pinot Noir offerings, but crafted in the Halleck Vineyard style.*

Kanzler Family Vineyards

Kanzler Vineyards is a family affair that began with the establishment of a Pinot Noir vineyard in the Sebastopol Hills in 1996. The Kanzlers moved to the area in 1994 in hopes of raising their two children in the country. The property was the site of a very old, barely-producing apple orchard. In order to make better use of the land, the Kanzlers explored the possibility of planting wine grapes. In the early 1990s, many winegrowers thought the Sebastopol Hills was too cold and windy for vineyards. The Kanzlers turned out to be lucky wine grape farmers after consulting with a next door neighbor, Perry Kozlowski of Kozlowski Farms, whose family had grown berries and apples in Sonoma County since 1949. Perry told them to grow premium wine grapes.

Sonoma County Viticulture Advisor Rhonda Smith of the University of California at Davis also felt the area had potential for growing Pinot Noir. Steve then immersed himself in the study of viticulture and took classes at University of California at Davis and Santa Rosa Junior College. After contacting vineyard manager Eric Neil, the 14.5-acre Kanzler Vineyard was planted in the spring of 1996.

The vineyard is planted in Goldridge sandy loam on Wilson Grove formation. Pinot Noir clones 115, 667 and Pommard 4 are planted on 101-14, 1103P and 420A rootstocks. The vines are vertical shoot positioned and cane pruned.



After the first harvest in 2000, grapes were sold to well-known wineries including Landmark Vineyards, Flowers Vineyard and Winery and Gary Farrell Vineyards and Winery. Little-known Kosta Browne realized the quality of the grapes and made a Kanzler Vineyard designated Pinot Noir every year since 2002. The 2004 Kosta Browne Kanzler Vineyard Pinot Noir was awarded a score of 98 points and both Kosta Browne and Kanzler Vineyards became well known to the Pinot Noir cognoscenti. As Kanzler Vineyards own wine production has grown, less grapes are sold to others but Kosta Browne and Lynmar Estate continue to receive an allocation.

The first successful wine made by Stephen and Landmark winemaker Greg Stach from the 2002 vintage was served to the 200 guests at daughter Melissa Kanzler's wedding. The wine was so well received, it was decided to produce Pinot Noir under the Kanzler Vineyards label. In 2004, they used four tons of fruit from the vineyard and crafted the first 250 cases of commercial Kanzler Vineyards Pinot Noir.

The winery is now in the hands of the second generation, Alex Kanzler. He was ten years old when the vineyard was planted and grew up working as a field hand. After college he pursued winemaking from Sonoma to New Zealand to Oregon and back to Sonoma. In 2011, he became the winemaker and in 2014 focused entirely on Kanzler Family Vineyards. Alex's spouse, Breana, handles consumer sales. The harvest photo below is of Alex and Breana Kanzler flanked by Stephen Kanzler and his current spouse.



Current production is 3,500 to 5,000 cases annually from the Estate Vineyard and other vineyard sources. Walker Station Vineyard, located southwest of Forestville in the Russian River Valley is now leased by Kanzler Vineyards and is a reliable source of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Fruit is also sourced from other small, family-owned vineyards in the area including Lolita Ranch, Mes Filles Vineyard and Umino Vineyard. A Russian River Valley Rosé and Walker Station Chardonnay have been added to the Pinot Noir lineup that includes the Kanzler Russian River Valley and Kanzler Estate Reserve bottlings.

The wines are primarily available to members of the winery's mailing list at www.kanzlervineyards.com. Labels have been updated and are designated Russian River Valley rather than Sonoma Coast beginning with the 2015 vintage since consumers can more readily identify with this winery's location in the Sebastopol Hills sub region of the Russian River Valley. The winery's label evolution:



When I visited recently, I sat down with Alex Kanzler to taste a vertical of Kanzler Vineyards Estate Reserve Pinot Noirs. All Kanzler Vineyards wines are crafted using the same techniques and no wine is predestined or precluded from inclusion in the Estate Reserve bottling. The only requirement is that it must be grown on Kanzler's 20-acre ranch. The Estate Reserve wine is a barrel selection capturing the feel of the vintage.

Typically, the Reserve Pinot Noirs are aged in 40%-50% new French oak barrels and the Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is raised in 25%-30% new French oak barrels. The wines in this vertical tasting show a common thread, but each vintage is distinctly different.

Tasting is available by appointment at Kanzler Vineyards. Visit www.kanzlervineyards.com.

2010 Kanzler Vineyards Estate Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc.. The first wine blended by Alex Kanzler. Only 15 barrels in this vintage and 75 cases of the Reserve wine. A healthy amount of whole cluster was included in the fermentation. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very nicely perfumed with whole cluster nuances of exotic spices, burnt tobacco and rose petal. Modest in weight with soft tannins, featuring flavors of dark red fruits, spice, savory herbs and oak char in the background. This wine has aged beautifully.* **91-92.**



2011 Kanzler Vineyards Estate Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. Some whole cluster inclusion, clone 115 driven. *This wine is gorgeous with plenty of Pinot singing. Uplifting aromas of cherry, blueberry and spice. A warm spice thread pervades the flavor profile. The silky, fine-grain tannins caress the palate and the finish is fresh and generous. A remarkable wine from a challenging vintage.* **93-94.**

2012 Kanzler Vineyards Estate Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Less whole cluster inclusion than in 2011. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Interesting aromas that include smoky cherry, incense, white pepper and a slight vegetal note. A slightly smoky char note pairs with mid weight blueberry and black cherry fruit flavors with added accents of dried herbs and warm spices. Nicely balanced, with silky tannins and a modest, but pleasing finish.* **91-92.**

2013 Kanzler Vineyards Estate Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc.. More Pommard clone included in this vintage. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose has much appeal, sporting aromas of black cherry, exotic Asian spices, and floral perfume. More richness and sappy intensity in this vintage. Broad and fruit driven on the palate featuring flavors of dark red and black fruits along with anise and tobacco notes. Broad and soft in the mouth, with suave, sandy tannins, and a finish of some note. 92-93.*



2014 Kanzler Vineyards Estate Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 225 cases, \$78 (sold out). Good percentage of whole cluster in this wine and a significant proportion of Dijon clone 115 (55%) along with Dijon clone 667 and Pommard clone. Three barrels of 115 clone were fermented with 25% whole cluster inclusion. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Similar in aromatic profile to the 2013 vintage with scents of cherry, spice and floral bouquet. Impressive attack of black cherry fruit that expands in the mouth. Juicy, with some textural interest, subtle oak in the background, and a very long finish featuring gorgeous black cherry fruit. The balance is impeccable. Will only improve with further time in the cellar. 93-94.*

2015 Kanzler Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 481 cases, \$56. Some Walker Station grapes along with Estate vineyard grapes. Very modest whole cluster inclusion (5%). 3 to 5-day cold soak, fermented with native yeast or inoculated commercial yeast in plastic bins or stainless steel fermentation tanks. Basket pressed and aged 14 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of black cherry and warm spices lead to a mid weight style offering flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and blackberry. Very modest tannins and bright acidity. Enters better than it finishes but highly enjoyable. Could use a little more time in bottle. 90-91.*

Benovia Winery 2015 Pinot Noir: Wow!

"Winemaking is about the journey and not the destination."

Winemaker Michael Sullivan

Co-owner and winemaker Michael Sullivan has been refining the Benovia style of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay since the winery's founding in 2005. Benovia began modestly in 2005 with the purchase of a small existing winery and a producing vineyard with 13.5 acres of Pinot Noir. In 2008, Benovia acquired an adjacent 40-acre horse ranch, expanding the total property acreage to 58. The Martaella Vineyard was planted with a very high vine density of between 2200 to 2722 vines per acre. The winery also owns two other estate vineyards: Cohn Vineyard located just outside the Russian River Valley AVA and Tilton Hill Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast AVA.

Today, Benovia produces 10,000 cases of primarily estate grown Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Zinfandel with an inaugural sparkling wine from the 2012 vintage to be released soon. Grapes are harvested from 71 acres of estate vineyards along with grapes sourced from grower partners such as the Martinelli family. Sullivan works out of a brand new winery specifically tailored to Pinot Noir production (pictured below), while the older winery is used for Chardonnay production.



I have followed the winery's evolution since the first releases in 2006, and have seen firsthand the remarkable progress that has ensued with the quality of the wines. The superb Pinot Noirs of the 2015 vintage bear this out. Due to rain during flowering, yields were markedly reduced in 2015, in some cases from a usual 2.5 tons per acre to a little over 0.1 ton per acre. Michael noted, "We got hammered," with overall yields down 30% to 40% from average. That said, as you can see from my reviews, the wines are magnificent featuring good acidity, lower alcohols, massive extraction and bold but balanced tannins.

The wines reviewed here were bottled in March 2017. The Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is released now, with the other wines to follow in the fall. The vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs are only now becoming accessible.

Pinot Noir vinification is careful and attentive. Careful sorting is followed by de-stemming and a 5 to 8-day cold soak. Indigenous yeast complete fermentation followed by an inoculated, very slow malolactic fermentation with lees stirring until the process is completed. The wines spend 14 to 16 months aging in French oak barrels.

Join the mailing list to get first shot at the 2015 Benovia Pinot Noirs. Quantities are limited. Visit www.benoviawinery.com. Tasting is available at the winery's Ranch House hospitality center by appointment. Join in at one of the events at the winery and get to know the very personable Michael Sullivan (pictured).



2015 Benovia Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.62, 2,600 cases, \$38. Released April 2016. Sourced from Martaella, Cohn, Tilton Hill and Zio Tony Vineyards. A blend of many clones including Calera, Swan, Mt. Eden, Pommard, Chalone and Cijon 777 and 943. Rigorously hand sorted, 100% de-stemmed, 8-day cold soak and fermented with indigenous yeast in open-top containers for more than two weeks. Aged in French oak barrels, 37% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Those nose opens in stages over time in the glass to a wondrous perfume of dark cherry and berry and spice. Quite dark fruited on the palate in a mid weight plus style of great concentration accented with a note of Asian 5-spice. Impressive fruit staying power through the mid palate and finish. Modest, velvety tannins, with a very giving finish. A superb appellation wine reflective of the vintage. 92.*

2015 Benovia Cohn Vineyard Sonoma County Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., unreleased. An historic 18-acre vineyard first planted in 1970, making it one of the oldest vineyards in the Russian River area. The vineyard is part of a 55-acre ranch purchased in 2003 by Benovia owners Joe Anderson and his spouse, Mary Dewane. This site has also produced celebrated single vineyard wines for Williams Selyem and Kosta Browne. This bottling comes from 9 acres of a *massale* selection (likely Martini and Pommard clones) of Pinot Noir. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of grape must and crushed berries. Mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, earth and smoke framed by silky tannins. Well-structured but not imposing. This is often my favorite wine in the Benovia lineup but this wine is not particularly expressive at this stage, even when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. I will re-visit this wine in a couple of months. 90-91.*



2015 Benovia Martaella Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., unreleased. This vineyard surrounds the winery in Santa Rosa in an area known as the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The 58-acre property has 42 acres of Pinot Noir (nine clones) and Chardonnay (four clones) planted in Goldridge soils. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. More forward drinking, with lifted aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, cola, spice and wilted rose. Delicious core of black fruits framed by discreet tannins. Very polished and fresh in character, with an extremely long and fruited finish. More modest in concentration than the La Pommeraie and Tilton Hill, but seduces with its vibrancy and openness.* **94.**



2015 Benovia Tilton Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., unreleased. The coldest Benovia estate vineyard, located a few miles from the Pacific Ocean near the town of Freestone. 11.7 acres were planted to Pinot Noir in 2009. Low vigor rootstock 420A and heirloom and Dijon selections of Pinot Noir. First vintage was 2012. *Deep, dark garnet color in the glass. The nose opens beautifully over time in the glass, revealing hi-tone aromas of black raspberry, spice box, underbrush and warm brioche. Lush and concentrated, with vigorous fruit flavors of blackberry, black raspberry and allaliberry. Impeccably balanced with supportive tannins and acidity, and a deft touch oak. The finish is quite special in its own right, although falling slightly short of the stunning La Pommeraie. Still a Lolita, and will benefit from more time in bottle.* **94.**



2015 Benovia La Pommeraie Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
Sourced from a vineyard farmed by George Martinelli located on Frei Road. The vineyard was once an apple orchard, leading to the name "La Pommeraie," French for "apple orchard." The vineyard is planted to a very high density of 1 meter x 2 meters or 2420 vines per acre. Dijon 777 and "828." *Deep, dark garnet color in the glass. Deep, dark garnet color in the glass. A highly nuanced perfume offers aromas of boysenberry, blackberry, dark rose petal, cardamom spice and underbrush. The gorgeous and core of sappy purple and black fruits is backed by toned and firm fruit tannins. Big as is typical for this vineyard, but focused and adroit, with a dreamy velvety texture and a very long and silky finish offering an added pleasing floral note. A perfect example of the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove. An extraordinary wine that I had to re-taste from a second bottle to be sure.* **98.**



Pinot Noir Rosé: A Wine with a Dissociative Identity Disorder

Pinot Noir Rosé has two distinct identities. One personality is that of a flirtatious, welcoming and social quaff that refreshes and casually satisfies as well enhances the enjoyment of many foods. A contrasting second personality is that of a wine begging to be taken seriously by the wine cognoscenti.

There is no question that Rosé wines have shown more growth in popularity recently than any other varietal as shown by these Nielsen statistics for U.S. retail wine sales the the year ending 11/05/16. The wine is affordable, easy to like and consumers are currently attracted to it in its dry form, while sweet forms such as white zinfandel are losing popularity. The French, who know a thing or two about wine, can't get enough Rosé, and one out of every three bottles consumed in that country is a Rosé.

Nielsen Table Wine Category Segments										
U.S. Expanded All Outlets Combined Plus Liquor/Convenience/AAFES										
52 WEEKS ENDING 11/05/16										
	Dollar Volume	\$ Vol % Chg vs Year Ago	\$ Share of Table Wine	\$ Share Chg vs YA	9 liter case equiv	Eq Vol % Chg vs Year Ago	EQ Share of Table Wine	Eq Share Chg vs YA	Avg Eq 750ml Price	Avg Eq 750ml Price Chg vs YA
TOTAL TABLE WINE	\$13,794,380,697	4.8	100.0	-	162,936,602	2.1	100.0	-	\$ 7.06	\$ 0.18
DM TABLE WINE	\$10,075,391,586	5.4	73.0	0.4	121,713,427	2.7	74.7	0.5	\$ 6.90	\$ 0.17
IMP TABLE WINE	\$3,718,989,121	3.3	27.0	(0.4)	41,223,160	0.2	25.3	(0.5)	\$ 7.52	\$ 0.22
ITALIAN TBL	\$1,228,863,014	6.2	8.9	0.1	11,156,125	4.6	6.8	0.2	\$ 9.18	\$ 0.14
AUSTRALIAN TBL	\$718,783,652	(3.7)	5.2	(0.5)	12,336,942	(3.4)	7.6	(0.4)	\$ 4.86	\$ (0.01)
ARGENTINE TBL	\$406,523,305	(4.4)	2.9	(0.3)	4,751,711	(7.2)	2.9	(0.3)	\$ 7.13	\$ 0.21
NEW ZEALAND TBL	\$386,666,740	15.4	2.8	0.3	2,838,729	13.5	1.7	0.2	\$ 11.35	\$ 0.19
FRENCH TBL	\$348,273,828	16.1	2.5	0.2	2,308,354	13.5	1.4	0.1	\$ 12.57	\$ 0.29
CHILEAN TBL	\$279,858,605	(4.6)	2.0	(0.2)	4,010,001	(4.6)	2.5	(0.2)	\$ 5.82	\$ 0.00
SPANISH TBL	\$166,865,652	2.6	1.2	(0.0)	2,099,744	(0.3)	1.3	(0.0)	\$ 6.62	\$ 0.19
GERMAN TBL	\$92,692,459	(4.3)	0.7	(0.1)	886,468	(5.5)	0.5	(0.0)	\$ 8.71	\$ 0.11
PORTUGUESE TBL	\$30,965,538	13.7	0.2	0.0	359,307	13.5	0.2	0.0	\$ 7.18	\$ 0.01
SOUTH AFRICAN TBL	\$28,728,335	2.6	0.2	(0.0)	251,773	(0.5)	0.2	(0.0)	\$ 9.51	\$ 0.28
A/O IMP COUNTRY TBL	\$30,768,056	3.3	0.2	(0.0)	223,858	0.4	0.1	(0.0)	\$ 11.45	\$ 0.31
CHARDONNAY	\$2,549,535,777	2.8	18.5	(0.3)	31,081,944	1.1	19.1	(0.2)	\$ 6.84	\$ 0.11
CAB SAUVIGNON	\$2,307,074,891	7.1	16.7	0.4	22,688,778	4.7	13.9	0.3	\$ 8.47	\$ 0.19
PINOT GRIGIO/GRIS	\$1,232,497,515	5.4	8.9	0.0	15,432,178	5.4	9.5	0.3	\$ 6.66	\$ 0.00
PINOT NOIR	\$1,003,050,151	9.2	7.3	0.3	8,196,374	6.6	5.0	0.2	\$ 10.20	\$ 0.24
MERLOT	\$833,527,712	(3.7)	6.0	(0.5)	11,928,917	(4.7)	7.3	(0.5)	\$ 5.82	\$ 0.06
SAUVIGNON BLANC	\$820,850,889	12.2	6.0	0.4	7,452,841	9.9	4.6	0.3	\$ 9.18	\$ 0.18
MOSCATO/MUSCAT TBL	\$721,117,445	3.6	5.2	(0.1)	10,378,166	3.4	6.4	0.1	\$ 5.79	\$ 0.01
WHT ZINFANDEL	\$333,763,479	(4.7)	2.4	(0.2)	6,853,254	(6.0)	4.2	(0.4)	\$ 4.06	\$ 0.06
MALBEC	\$285,528,307	(1.8)	2.1	(0.1)	2,690,336	(3.1)	1.7	(0.1)	\$ 8.84	\$ 0.11
RIESLING	\$266,377,758	(1.3)	1.9	(0.1)	2,911,743	(1.3)	1.8	(0.1)	\$ 7.62	\$ (0.00)
ZINFANDEL	\$238,503,506	(1.4)	1.7	(0.1)	1,880,630	(5.0)	1.2	(0.1)	\$ 10.57	\$ 0.39
SYRAH/SHIRAZ	\$136,855,057	(11.2)	1.0	(0.2)	1,681,517	(12.2)	1.0	(0.2)	\$ 6.78	\$ 0.08
ROSE TABLE 750ML BE >7.99	\$135,297,350	55.4	1.0	0.3	849,646	54.2	0.5	0.2	\$ 13.27	\$ 0.10
GLOBAL TBL BE 0-2.99	\$786,558,186	(2.4)	5.7	(0.4)	27,151,451	(3.5)	16.7	(1.0)	\$ 2.41	\$ 0.03
GLOBAL TBL BE 3-5.99	\$4,137,639,994	1.1	30.0	(1.1)	70,496,482	1.0	43.3	(0.4)	\$ 4.89	\$ 0.00
GLOBAL TBL BE 6-8.99	\$1,623,618,448	(1.8)	11.8	(0.8)	17,892,853	(1.6)	11.0	(0.4)	\$ 7.56	\$ (0.01)
GLOBAL TBL BE 9-11.99	\$3,218,208,886	7.4	23.3	0.6	26,688,644	7.0	16.4	0.8	\$ 10.05	\$ 0.04
GLOBAL TBL BE 12-14.99	\$1,885,568,627	10.2	13.7	0.7	12,072,888	10.1	7.4	0.5	\$ 13.02	\$ 0.01
GLOBAL TBL BE 15-19.99	\$1,161,560,025	12.6	8.4	0.6	5,666,344	12.5	3.5	0.3	\$ 17.08	\$ 0.01
GLOBAL TBL BE >20	\$967,793,526	11.1	7.0	0.4	2,869,007	11.4	1.8	0.1	\$ 28.11	\$ (0.08)

Data Source: Nielsen. Formatting and analysis: Wine Industry Insight

However, some question whether Rosé wines are serious enough to be discussed in the same breath as popular Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines. Wine critics have even been downright degrading, questioning whether Rosé should be seriously reviewed. Susan Manfull recently published an article online - "Is Rosé a Serious Wine?" at www.provencewine.com. Although her comments focused on Rosé from Provence, her quotes from informed sources are applicable to domestic Rosé wines as well. Like any wine, there are cheap, inexpensive insipid examples, but the overall quality has markedly increased over past two decades. "The results are a very diverse palate of quality Rosés - some are simple ones for everyday enjoyment and others are made to be enjoyed with gastronomic meals."

I would say most domestic wineries offering Pinot Noir Rosé are committed to quality and take their wine very seriously. Certain wine critics, including myself, review Rosé wines like we would any other premium wine since it can be a somewhat complex wine with seductive perfume, tantalizing flavors and refreshing acidity. That

said, because Rosés generally lack the nuance, the tannic structure, the concentration and the finish of Pinot Noir wines, I judge them only against other examples of the genre and score them in comparison to other Pinot Noir Rosés.

Here are a number of recently released 2016 Pinot Noir Rosé wines (and one outlier) that show the commitment of their winemakers to quality. The wines are, after all, a reflection of the winery's reputation.

There is considerable variety in the types of bottles used for Rosé wines. The wines reviewed here were bottled in various formats, including the traditional sloping Pinot Noir bottle, the tall Alsatian bottle, as well as Bordeaux white wine styled bottles. The wines are noticeably lower in general in alcohol as the grapes are usually picked at a lower Brix. All of these wines are best served chilled.

National Rosé day is coming up on June 10.



2016 Balletto Vineyards Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir 4,800 cases, \$18. Estate grown and bottled. The winery's rosé was originally a saignée with residual sugar, but Anthony Beckman has taken the wine more seriously since 2009, now producing 50% of it whole cluster like a white wine, 50% saignée, and vinifying it in stainless steel in a completely dry style. *Aromas of strawberry, blood orange and herbs leads to a bright, clean, crisp and smoothly textured wine, offering delightful flavors of red berries, peach and pink grapefruit.* **92.** One of the few Russian River Valley wineries making a significant quantity of Pinot Noir Rosé.

2016 Big Table Farm Laughing Pig Willamette Valley Pinot Noir Rosé 14.3% alc., 129 cases, \$32. Smaller crop load, smaller berries and clusters meant less saigné this vintage. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Highly appealing nose featuring aromas of wild strawberry, peach, garden herbs, sweet tobacco and potpourri. Medium bodied with flavors of strawberry, cranberry, yellow nectarine, savory herbs and spice. Nicely balanced, with some persistence on the red-fruited finish.* **92.**

2016 Cosa Obra Sonoma County Los Carneros Rosé of Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.09, TA 0.88, \$18. Sourced from Sangiacomo Southern Sonoma Vineyard, first planted in 1974. 100% Pommard. Produced by the saignée method. *Moderate salmon color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of golden apple, strawberry and lychee. More expressive in the mouth with noticeable richness and intensity, offering flavors of nectarine and blood orange, finishing dry and slightly tart with a charge of pink grapefruit.* **88.**

2016 Liquid Farm Vogelzang Vineyard Happy Canyon Santa Barbara County Rosé 11.5% alc., \$22.50. Mourvèdre grapes. *Light apricot color in the glass. Slight reduction on the nose with aromas of slate, wild strawberry, blood orange and white flowers. Clean, refreshing and smoothly textured, with flavors of apricot, peach and blood orange, finishing with a juicy cut of acidity.* **90.**



2016 Lumos Chiquita Estate Oregon Pinot Noir Rosé 13.5% alc., 86 cases, \$25. Released April 1, 2017. Produced from organic grapes. *Moderate ruby red color in the glass. Inviting aromas of strawberry, white flowers and a hint of spice. Good richness of fruit, with flavors of red berries and orange flower water. Bone dry, with a cleansing finish offering some length.* **91.**



2016 Spell Estate Sonoma County Vin Gris of Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 348 cases, \$23. A saignée of Pinot Noir (juice removed from each lot of Pinot Noir as it is being de-stemmed into the fermenter. Aged in neutral French oak barrels and stainless steel. *Light pink color in the glass. Reserved, but pleasant scent of cherry juice and yellow peach. Bone dry, with flavors of melon, peach, orange zest and a hint of dried herbs.* **88.**

2016 Red Car North Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., \$22. 60% Sonoma Coast and 40% Mendocino Ridge. Harvested at very low Brix, whole cluster pressed off the skins and fermented in a mix of oak barrels and stainless steel. Wild yeast fermentation. *Very light pink color in the glass. Engaging aromas of red berries,*

orange zest and a hint of nutty oak. A bit of spritz is evident. Flavorful, with tastes of pear, strawberry and passion fruit, finishing dry and tangy with the slightest tannin. **88.**



2016 Robert Sinskey Vineyards Los Carneros Vin Gris of Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., \$26. From organic grapes grown at Robert Sinskey vineyards. Whole cluster pressed. Moderately light apricot color in the glass. Exuberant aromas of blood orange, strawberry, peach and floral bouquet. Highly satisfying, with flavors of orange, apricot and yellow peach.

This wine speaks of California sunshine and is consistently one of the finest domestic Rosés in the marketplace. **92.**



2016 Tongue Dancer Putnam Vineyard Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 35 cases, \$(sold out). Moderate pink color in the glass. An array of aromas are offered, including dark strawberry, spice, yellow plum and floral bouquet. A richer style and darker fruited style, with flavors of blueberry and purple berry, along with orange, pink grapefruit and nutty oak. Nicely composed, with gentle tannin and some length on the finish. **89.**

Sips of Recently Tasted Pinot Noir

August West and Sandler Wine Company, San Francisco, California

Established in 2002, August West is a partnership between winemaker Ed Kurtzman and growers Howard Graham and John Peterson. Visit www.augustwestwine.com. Sandler Wine Company is the personal label of Ed Kurtzman that allows him to express terroir from many regions of California. He crafts Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, Zinfandel and Grenache from acclaimed sites. Visit www.sandlerwine.com. Both labels offer wines through an allocated mailing last at the respected websites. Tasting is available at the winery by appointment. Prices for these premium wines are very sensible. You may know that Ed is a veteran winemaker who has consulted for a number of labels including Freeman Winery & Vineyards.



2015 August West Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$34. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Hi-tone aromas of Bing cherry, baking spices, rose and sandalwood draw one into the glass. Delightfully flavored with the essence of cherry accented with subtle spice and oak. After entry, this mid weight plus wine expands its reach in the mouth and lasts enduringly on the finish. There is excellent vibrancy and gentle tannins as well. 91.*



2015 August West Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$34. Sourced from Peterson and Tondre Grapefield vineyards. 100% de-stemmed, 16 days on the skins. Aged 11 months in 15% new and 85% used French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of dark red berries, rose petal and oak-driven spice and toast. Middleweight in style, with a flavorful core of dark red and purple berries. A bit earthy reflecting its origins. Rather forward drinking with easy going tannins and some finishing power. 90.*

2015 August West Graham Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$48. This vineyard is located in cool Green Valley of the Russian River Valley, first planted in 2002 under the direction of Charlie Chenoweth. Clones are 667, 777, "828," and 23 in this bottling. Goldridge soils. 100% de-stemmed. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Quintessential Russian River Valley in character with a bold yet charming core of black cherry, strawberry, mocha, cola, fertile earth and floral goodness. Beautifully composed with impeccable balance and a cherry-driven finish that demands applause. 93.*

2015 August West Peterson Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$48. This 9.8-acre vineyard was acquired in 2010 by John Peterson after its second year of production. It is located less than one quarter of a mile southeast of Rosella's Vineyard. Clones are "828," 667, 777, 115 and Pommard. Very small crop in 2015. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 57% new and 43% used French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. This wine leans more on oak character, offering aromas and flavors of black cherry, toast and espresso. Firm tannins provide structure while juicy acidity brings the wine into balance. The finish is notable for its persistence. This wine should benefit from more time in bottle to better integrate the oak. 90.*



2015 Sandler Wine Co Peterson Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$40. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 100% used French oak barrels. This vineyard tends to be ostentatious at an early age and this vintage is no exception. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Spellbinding aromas of black cherry, raspberry, sandalwood and perfumed flowers. Discreetly weighted and quite gracious, yet offering a full flavor experience including tastes of black raspberry and blackberry fruits. Very suave in the mouth, with silky tannins, a velvety mouthfeel and a lovely finish. A harmonious offering for connoisseurs. 94.*





2015 Sandler Wine Co. Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$36. Grapes were de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in used French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. A seductive nose leads with aromas of black cherry, pomegranate, spice cabinet, smoke and a hint of rose petal. Middleweight in style and quite elegant and polished, with a red fruited core featuring cherry and strawberry flavors. Seamless, with a modestly intense yet seductive finish. 92.*

2015 Sandler Wine Co. Keefer Ranch Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$40. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 100% used French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. This wine is rather reluctant to reveal its charms at this early stage. Aromas of dark berries, wood pile and spice arrive slowly in the glass. Notable intensity of black cherry fruit on the attack and mid palate with very impressive intensity on the finish. Juicy acidity keeps the wine fresh. This beauty will need a few years in bottle to fully express itself. 90-92.*



2015 Sandler Wine Co. Boer Vineyard Chalone Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 71 cases, \$36. Very low yields in this vintage at 1 ton per acre. 100% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 11 months in 100% used French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. A unique wine with wondrous aromas of cherry, lavender, leather and Asian spices. Light to mid weight in character, with cherry and red berry fruit flavors accompanied by savory herb and subtle oak notes. Very elegant, with noticeable but not imposing fruit tannins, finishing with uplifting juiciness. 92.*

Hahn, Soledad, California

Hahn is a family owned winery producing estate grown wines from Monterey County. The winery's vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands, Lone Oak, Smith, Doctor's and Hook, provide the grapes for the SLH bottlings. These Hahn SLH wines are in widespread distribution and represent some of the best value priced Pinot Noir and Chardonnay offerings in the marketplace. Visit www.hahnwines.com.

2015 Hahn SLH Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 15.0% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.57, 13,941 cases, \$30. Released November 2016. Fermented in open-top stainless steel tanks, aged for up to 12 months in French oak barrels, 33% new and 67% neutral. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of blackberry jam, mocha and toasty oak. Richly endowed in a mid weight plus style, featuring black raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors framed by prominent oak embellishment. Velveteen in texture, with balanced tannins and a modest fruit driven finish. 88.*



2015 Hahn SLH Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.60, 11,610 cases, \$25. 94% Lone Oak Vineyard. Released November 2016. Whole cluster pressed and fermented and aged 12 months in French oak barrels, 33% new and 67% neutral. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Nicely appointed aromas of lemon oil, spiced apple, pineapple, buttery brioche and nutty oak. Sleek in the mouth, with satisfying flavors of lemon, Golden Delicious apple and pear with deft oak input. Impressive balance with a quenching finish. Highly recommended at this price point. 90.*

More Wines

2015 Cobden Wini Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.63, 100 cases, \$50. Released 11/11/16. Minimum sulfur used in vinification. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Nicely appointed aromas of Montmorency cherry, spice and complimentary oak. Prudently concentrated, with bright flavors of dark cherry, plum, cola, tobacco and spice. Silky in the mouth with good harmony, tactful oak in the background, and a deep cherry finish. 92.*



2014 Dehlinger Altamont Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.9% alc., \$70. Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Expressive aromas of Bing cherry, spice and sous-bois. Full-bodied, with a core of gorgeous black cherry fruit accented with flavors of cola, spice and dark chocolate. Plush and seductive in the mouth, with a seamless character, finishing with an entrancing deep cherry remembrance. **94.**



2014 Hunt & Ryde Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 275 cases, \$40. Estate grown by the Fieri family (Guy Fieri is a television personality on the Food Network) and vinified by winemaker Guy Davis of Davis Family Vineyards. Named for brothers Hunter and Ryder. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Dark garnet color in the glass. The fruit in this wine reached full ripeness as is typical of a number of Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs in this vintage. The nose offers an inviting marriage of black cherry fruit and oak aromas with an added spice note. Luscious and plush on the palate in a mid to full bodied style featuring flavors of black cherry, blueberry-pomegranate and dark chocolate. Balanced tannins with modest acidity, finishing with a thrust of black cherry goodness. **92.**



2014 Jigar Peters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$36. From a vineyard farmed by Randy Peters, a pioneering winegrower in the Sebastopol Hills subregion of the Russian River Valley/Sonoma Coast. Gold Medal at 2016 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Drinking beautifully now, with vivid aromas of black cherry, dark raspberry coulis, and spice. Juicy and satisfying, with a mid weight core of fresh black cherry fruit back by deft oak integration. Impressive balance with a pleasing finish. **92**

2014 La Follette Van der Kamp Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.60, 252 cases, \$42. This unique vineyard is located at 1,400 feet elevation overlooking the Sonoma Valley. 8 clones of Pinot Noir are sustainably farmed by Ulysses Van der Kamp. Native primary and secondary fermentations. 15% Pinot Meunier vinified whole cluster. Light ruby red color in the glass. A complex nose leads with aromas of red cherry, spice, earth, smoke, stem and anise. Light to mid weight in a gracious style, featuring a cherry core framed by toasty, tobacco oak. Corralled mountain tannins, with a rustic character leaning more on oak and savory notes than fruit. The slightest alcoholic warmth shows up on the modest finish. **89.**



2015 RAEN Royal St. Robert Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

13.0% alc., 800 cases, \$56. Moderate garnet color in the glass. A complex nose offers a perfume of brambly red berries, potpourri, burnt tobacco and exotic spices. Splendid attack of cherry, strawberry and raspberry fruits in a fresh and crunchy style with oak chiming in with aplomb. This wine delights with balanced fruit tannins, a hearty and sustained finish, and an appealing elegance. **95.**



2015 Siduri Yamhill-Carlton Oregon Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 2,200 cases, \$36, screwcap. Sourced from Gran Moraine and GMW East vineyards. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black raspberry, purple rose, nutmeg and vanilla arrive with more vividness over time in the glass. Mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and blackberry in an intensely fruit-driven styled wine with a satiny mouthfeel and a bold charge of ripe fruit on the slightly astringent finish. **90.**

2015 Siduri Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 2,745 cases, \$35, screwcap. Sourced from John Sebastiano, Clos Pepe and Cargasacchi vineyards. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 10% new. Light

ruby red color in the glass. Leading off are bright aromas of cherry, cranberry and sandalwood. Juicy and pleasing on the palate with an oak-kissed cherry core. Silky, with balanced tannins, lively acidity, noticeable oak overlay and the slightest sense of alcoholic heat on the finish. 88.



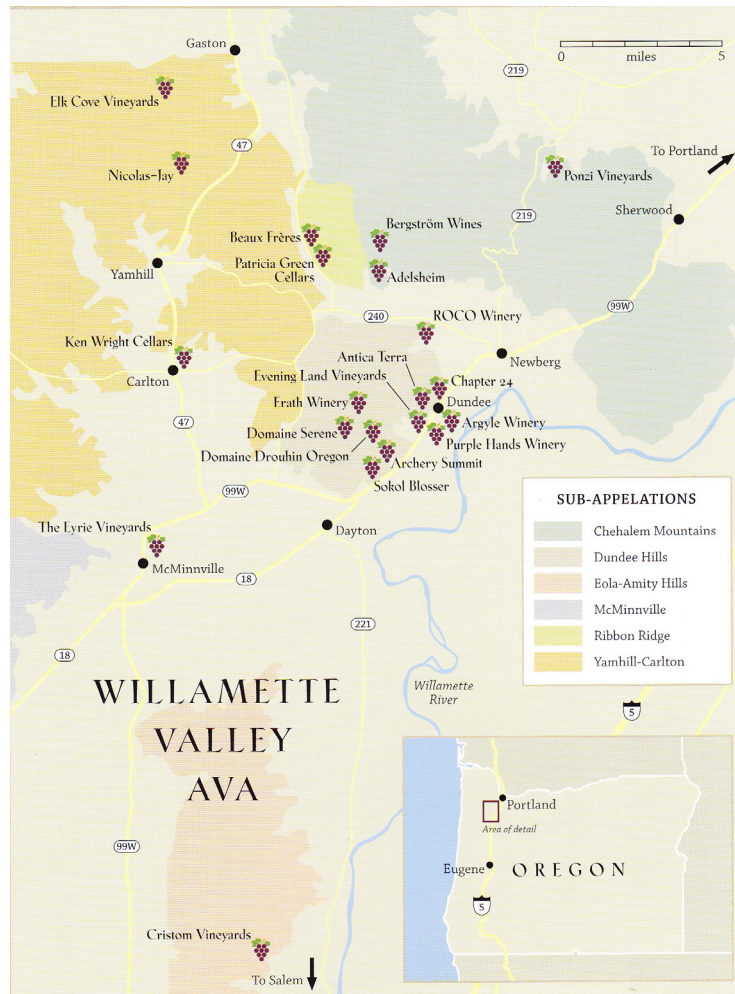
2015 Siduri Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 2,121 cases, \$35, screwcap. Sourced from Rosella's, Garys', Pisoni, Sierra Mar, Soberanes, Lemoravo and Escolle vineyards. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. A fruit-driven, mid weight plus offering with a soul of boysenberry and blackberry fruits underlain with some spice, earth and toasty oak. Good integration of tannins, sleek in texture, with a little persistence on the finish that reveals the slightest bit of alcoholic warmth. 89.*

Pinot Briefs

Attention International Pinot Noir Celebration Attendees! Registration is now open for the University of Pinot seminars for full weekend registered guests. These courses promise to educate and expand your appreciation of Pinot Noir. Full course descriptions are included on the IPNC website at www.ipnc.org. Enroll in a class using your IPNC register number. Speakers include Patrick Comiskey, Allen Meadows, Josh Reynolds and Stuart Pigott. Register before the class of your choice is filled.



The Wines and Wineries of Oregon's Willamette Valley This is a recently published book written by Nick Wise and Linda Sunshine (authors of *Celebrity Vineyards* and *California Celebrity Vineyards*) profiling twenty wineries in a travelogue format. The book could easily have been titled Oregon's Celebrity Wineries because the wineries chosen for inclusion are among the highest typically profiled in Oregon: The Eyrie Vineyards, Ponzi Vineyard, Erath Winery, Adelsheim, Domaine Serene, Ken Wright Cellars, Argyle Winery, Cristom Vineyards, Archery Summit, Domaine Drouhin Oregon among others.

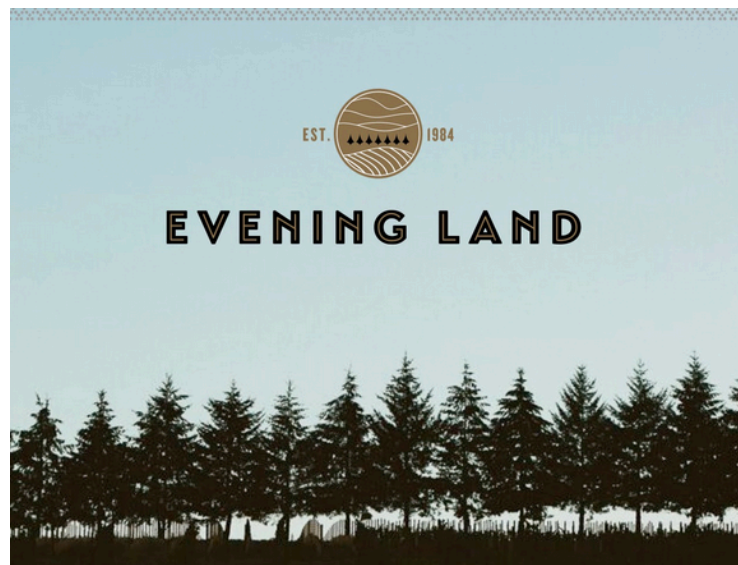


Winesong 2017 This year's charity Auction and Tasting is scheduled for September 8 & 9 in the Mendocino Coast. On Friday, September 8, "A Pinot Noir Celebration" will be hosted by Little River Inn and will feature a tasting of Pinot Noirs from Anderson Valley and other Pinot centric wine regions (\$75). On the following day, September 9, the Charity Auction and Grand Tasting will be held on the grounds of the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens (\$150, Reserve Ticket \$250). Sample wines, beer, cider and spirits along with nibbles from chefs and caterers. This year's Honored Vintner is Nils Venge of Saddleback Cellars and Honored Auction Chairs are Dan Berger and George Rose. This philanthropic event benefits the Mendocino Coast Hospital Foundation. For information and tickets, visit www.winesong.org.

Shareholder Opportunity at Willamette Valley Vineyards Preferred Shares are now authorized for the new Bernau Estate vineyard and winery near Dundee that will produce méthode champenoise sparkling wines from biodynamically-grown grapes. The winery will offer Oregon-inspired hospitality with gardens and a wine cave. As an owner of Preferred Stock, an investor will earn Founder status, invitation to winery celebrations, and savings on wine. Shares are offered at \$4.35 a share and offer a 5.1% dividend if a subscription is completed by June 30, 2017. For a prospectus, visit www.wvv.com/ownership.

Willamette Valley Wineries Association (WVWA) Trade Auction Willamette Valley can now consider itself in the same company as the Trade Auctions in Sonoma County and Napa County. The second WVWA Trade Pinot Noir Barrel Auction held in late March at The Allison Inn raised \$472,000. 69 Oregon wineries contributed unique lots of Pinot Noir from the 2015 vintage for the auction and all wines were sold out in only 80 minutes. Each case averaged more than \$1,100. The event drew more than 400 attendees. For more information, visit www.willamettewines.com.

Vineyard Tours at Seven Springs Vineyard Nothing informs the tasting experience more than kicking up some dirt in the iron-rich volcanic soils of the Eola-Amity Hills. Visitors are able to feel the cool wind of the Van Duzer corridor at their back exactly what the vines feel. Tours are available on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month June through October. Reservations are required and the tour and tasting fee of \$65 per person is processed at the time of booking. To book a vineyard tour of the historic Seven Springs Vineyard, email oregonhospitality@elvwines.com or call 503-538-4110.



Chehalem Donates \$40,000 Worth of Wine to Charity Chehalem Winery is launching its inaugural Making a Case for Giving campaign to celebrate Oregon Wine Month. Chehalem plans to give away at least 100 cases of wine, worth up to \$40,000 to charities. Applicants for receiving the wine donation must be a non-profit organization located in Oregon or greater Vancouver, WA metro area and submit their 501(c)(3) along with a completed application. Full details and a downloadable application are available at www.chehalemwines.com.

Carabella Winery Offering Vineyard Tours and Seated Tastings Experience beautiful Parrett Mountain while you stroll through the vineyard learning about the geology and sustainable growing

practices. Enjoy a seated tasting paired with artisanal Willamette Valley hors d'oeuvres with Carabella's finest wines including reserve and library bottlings. By appointment only from May to September. Cost is \$40, refundable with a \$100 wine purchase. Call 503-925-0972. Also, visit the Big Bottles page at www.carabellawine.com. Limited edition, etched 3-liter bottles inspired by the wildflowers of the Willamette Valley are featured.



News from Et Fille Wines A followup to the untimely death of Howard Mozeico, the co-owner and winemaker of Et Fille Wines. Daughter Jessica has become the owner and winemaker and the winery's tasting room will continue to be open. She has assumed the honor and responsibility to carry Et Fille forward in a manner consistent with her Dad's vision, values and palate. Howard was a good man and I spent a number of sessions tasting his wines with him. Knowing Jessica also, I am certain she will be able to carry the family winery forward successfully. Et Fille is releasing the 2014 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, 2014 Heredity Pinot Noir (a reserve blend), the 2014 Kalita Vineyard Pinot Noir and the 2014 Fairsing Vineyard Pinot Noir Memorial Day Weekend. Visit www.etfillewines.com.



Third Annual Silicon Valley Wine Auction Raises \$1 Million The Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Education Foundation's Wine Auction on May 20 and 21, 2017, drew more than 1,000 guests to Runnymede Farm in Woodside, California. The event featured 50 local vintners from the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association pouring their ultra premium wines. Over \$1,000,000 was raised for the Silicon Valley Education Foundation's Elevate Math and STEM leadership Institute programs.

Taste of Mendocino More than 30 wineries will be pouring along with numerous Mendocino County artisanal food producers at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco on Saturday, June 10, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.. The event is sponsored by Mendocino WineGrowers, Inc., an alliance of grape growers and vintners working together to promote the grapes and wines from Mendocino County.



Brewer-Clifton Sold to Jackson Family As reported by the Wine Spectator on May 18, Jackson Family Wines has acquired Brewer-Clifton including the winery's second brand, Diatom, 60 acres of estate vineyards and a long-term lease on a winery and tasting room in Lompoc, California. Founder Greg Brewer sold his company shares but remains as the winemaker. Brewer and Steve Clifton started Brewer-Clifton in 1996 very modestly and built a reputation for outstanding Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from estate fruit. In 2015, Brewer-Clifton was sold to investors with Steve Clifton departing from the winery to focus on the La Voix and Palmina brands. Brewer then sold his shares as did the investors to Jackson Family wines. Brewer-Clifton now joins two other California Pinot Noir producers joining the Jackson Family Wines stable: Siduri and Copain.

Bacigalupi Vineyards is One of My Favs It has been remarkable to have followed Pam and John Bacigalupi and their twin daughters, Katey and Nicole, bring Bacigalupi Vineyards to the very top echelon of Russian River Valley wineries. These are truly genuine people producing genuine wines that are now stunning. Winemaker Ashley Herzberg has helped lead the way. With superb Bacigalupi grape sources, she vinifies wines with native yeast fermentations, bottling them unfiltered and unfiltered. I stopped in to visit with Nicole when I was in the Russian River Valley recently, and I was taken by the 2015 Bacigalupi Russian River Valley Goddard Ranch Pinot Noir and 2015 Bacigalupi Russian River Valley Chardonnay. The grapes for the Chardonnay (\$60) were grafted from vines sourced for the legendary 1976 Paris Tasting Chardonnay and the wine is rated 96 points by me. The Goddard Ranch Pinot Noir (\$72) comes from the Bacigalupi family's most established vineyard site acquired in 1956. I rated this wine 96 as well. The winery's Petite Sirah and Zinfandel are to die for as well. This is one of the select few wineries I buy wine from these days and I am happy to shout their praise.



Senders Wines Prepares for 2nd Surgical Outreach of 2017 Senders Wines' Dr. Craig Senders will travel with other medical professionals to perform cleft lip and palate repair in the Philippines in late May. The trip is part a surgical charity, Operation Restore Hope. Dr. Senders makes several such trips each year pro bono that are funded in part by the wine he makes. Dr. Senders' most recent trip took place last winter in Bohol, Philippines and resulted in 62 procedures on 54 patients. Senders wines has garnered numerous accolades and is about to join a downtown Napa tasting room, Feast it Forward. Dr. Senders specializes in Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon, and splits his time between commuting to Sacramento and Napa from Davis, California where he is the Director of the University of California at Davis Cleft and Craniofacial Program. For information about Senders Wines, visit www.senderswines.com.

Noted Pinot Noir Winemaker, Richard Ward, of Saintsbury Has Passed Away

Richard Ward was one of the first to make Pinot Noir in the Carneros region of Napa Valley. His business partner at Saintsbury said that Ward died from complications of a bone marrow transplant and was 67 years old. Ward and Graves founded Saintsbury Winery in 1981 and soon made a reputation for Carneros Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The winery was among the first in California to plant Dijon clones of Pinot Noir.

Sta. Rita Hills Wine and Fire 2017 Tickets On Sale All three events sold out in 2016 so get your individual tickets now at <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/the-sta-rita-hills-wine-alliance-3852698419>. Organized by the Sta. Rita Hills Wine Alliance, Wine and Fire will be held August 18-20. Events include a Barn Party at Dierberg Star Lane in Lompoc, a Saturday Morning Focused Tasting and Lunch at El Jabali Vineyard and the Grand Tasting at La Purisima Mission in Lompoc. Early Bird pricing ends July 31. A Tasting Passport to participating member wineries is included in the purchase of event tickets.

Another Article Poses an Alcohol-linked Cancer Scare but Proves Nothing An article in the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) is titled, "Just One Drink Can Harm." That sensationalized title is a scary proposition that carries no weight and is misleading to the consumer. A review from the American Institute for Cancer Research Fund and the World Cancer Research Fund of 119 studies on the risks of developing breast cancer, concluded that a glass of wine or beer a day (about 10 grams of alcohol, close to a standard drink of 14 grams of alcohol) increases the risk of breast cancer by 5% in premenopausal women and 9% in postmenopausal women. There are a couple of caveats here. First, the review does not prove that alcohol causes breast cancer, only that there is an association. Secondly, the analysis of previous studies are always flawed by the fact that they involve asking women how much they drank, an imperfect way of collecting reliable data. It has been shown from years of retrospective studies that alcohol makes breast cancer slightly more likely, BUT it reduces heart attack risk. This fact was never mentioned in the WSJ article. The International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research has concluded, "An individual will need to weight the modest risks of light to moderate alcohol use on breast cancer development against the beneficial effects on cardiovascular disease to make the best personal choice regarding alcohol consumption." The words of Richard A. Baxter, M.D. seem most reasonable regarding wine and breast cancer, "The smart choice favors having a glass of wine with dinner and not stressing over it." A better title for this article would have been, "Alcohol is Among Many Factors Possibly Putting Women at Small Risk for Breast Cancer."

Tidbits from My Last Visit to Russian River Valley

- * Sonoma County plans to have all vineyards sustainable by 2020 and organically farmed by 2025.
- * No surprise that McDonald's closed in Sebastopol - just didn't fit in with the community ethos.
- * Can't rave enough about dinners I had at Campo Fina in Healdsburg, (Scopa by the same owners has closed), Spinster Sisters in Santa Rosa, Diavola in Geyserville and Drawing Board in Petaluma.
- * Word is Single Thread restaurant is fantastic, especially if you are into Asian cuisine. Gorgeous decor, impeccable service and food to die for served in 11 courses of small courses featuring seasonal bounty from the owner's farm. Michelin 3 star quality. Prepaid reservations for 2-5 guests is \$293.35 per person not including wine selection. Five suites for overnight. Visit www.singlethreadfarms.com.
- * Larger wineries are providing housing for their farm workers to insure consistent and reliable employees.
- * Many wineries are foregoing the traditional bottle capsule and simply closing bottles with cork only.
- * Healdsburg plans to limit number of tasting rooms in future so as not to be overrun with them.
- * 20 Sonoma County Farmers Markets now open. Healdsburg Certified Farmers Market is open Weds from 4.00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m..

Kosta Browne 20th Anniversary Offerings To celebrate twenty years, Kosta Browne has set aside three special wines to mailing list customers: 2013 Estate Pinot Noir (first estate blend of fruit from Keefer Ranch and Gap's Crown vineyards- \$100), 2014 Klopp Thorn Ridge Pinot Noir (a dry-farmed vineyard in the Sebastopol Hills - first and so far only time Kosta Browne has bottled a single vineyard designated wine from this site - aged in concrete tank - \$100), and 2015 Bottlegger's Hill Chardonnay (aka "Special K" - Wente Hyde clone - 3 barrel production - aged 8 months in concrete egg - magnums only, \$225). Offering goes live June 6 for mailing list members.

