



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards

“Elite” - regarded as the finest, the best of their kind.

The term “Grand Cru” applied to a vineyard started in France generations ago. In Burgundy, the title refers to a select group of vineyards that are known for maintaining a consistent reputation year after year and are the most famous wine-producing land parcels. There are 33 Grand Crus in the Cote d’Or that makeup only about 1% of the annual wine produced in Burgundy. The plots of Grand Cru vines are called ‘climats’ (climates) signifying a plot of vines that benefits from specific geological (soil) and climatic conditions. Grand Cru wines prominently display the name of the climat from which the wine originates on the label. The Grands Crus are the “elite” of Burgundy vineyards.

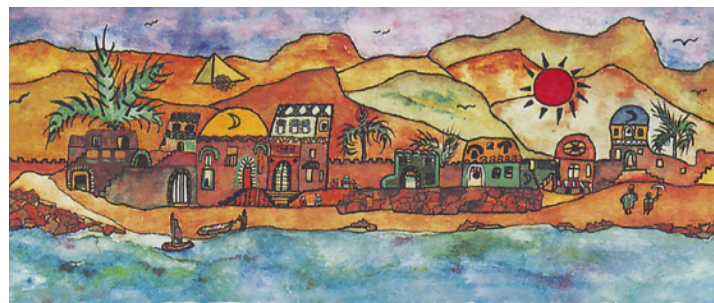
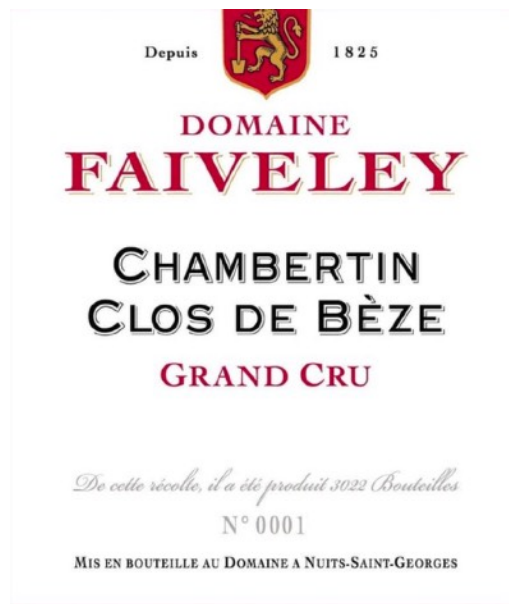
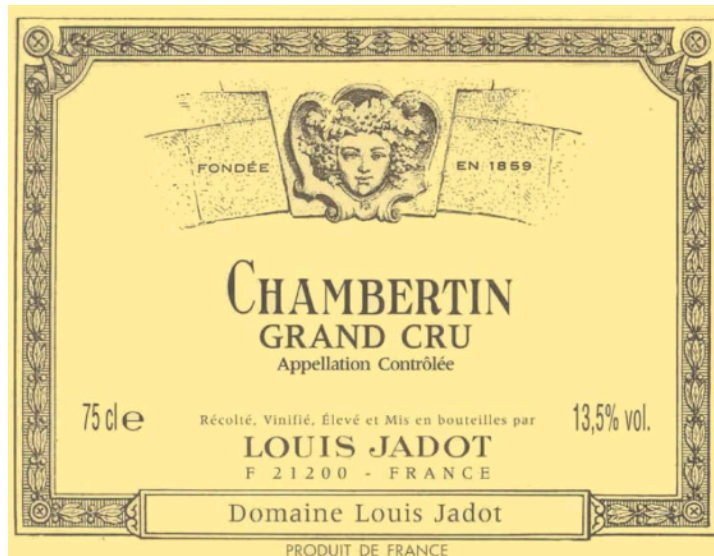
In Burgundy, Grand Cru vineyards have the greatest potential for ripeness. California lacks a comparable grand cru system in part because there is more universal ripeness among vineyards. Also, most California Pinot Noir vineyards are made up of multiple blocks, often dedicated to one clone that complicates any classification of the entire vineyard. In Burgundy, the vineyards are generally composed of a blend of selections or *selection massale*, that is, vineyards that have been propagated with cuttings from old vines rather than nursery stock.

Any attempted classification of the best California Pinot Noir vineyards is largely subjective since there are no objective definitions. Although the term grand cru has been used by some to designate the finest vineyards, I prefer to use the term “elite.” Elite vineyards have a long and consistent history of producing great wines either as a monopole (the vineyard is controlled by a single wine company and the wine from that vineyard is produced and sold only by that wine company) or as a fruit source for multiple producers. Most elite California Pinot Noir vineyards are monopoles.

Additional criteria for my consideration as an elite California Pinot Noir vineyard include: (1) the right vines are planted in a location with the correspondingly right soil and climate, (2) the vines have aged ten years and beyond, (3) the resultant wines exhibit age-ability (10-25 years), (4) the resultant wines demonstrate terroir-driven character and complexity, and (5) vineyards that have produced wines that I find elite based on tasting wines from these vineyards over a number of vintages.

There are many stellar vineyards that have been omitted and probably you can name several of those that are your favorites. My choices simply reflect my subjective opinion. Practically speaking, the value of this list is that Pinot Noir wines produced from these elite vineyards have a high probability of excellence and therefore serve as a reliable guide for your Pinot Noir purchases.

The upper portion of red Burgundy labels prominently feature the climat where the wine originated, while the name of the producer is less emphasized with positioning at the bottom of the label (see Jadot label below). There are, however, exceptions, and the label may emphasize the producer (see Faiveley label below). Domestic Pinot Noir always gives priority to the name of the winery that produced the wine with lesser emphasis on the vineyard(s) where the wine came from. Domestic labels also include the name of the varietal, namely Pinot Noir, that is almost always omitted on red Burgundy labels (see Ancien label below).



As domestic Pinot Noir has enjoyed a surge in popularity over the last three decades and the consumer has become more knowledgeable, there has been an increasing emphasis on the vineyard source. With that in mind, I have created detailed information on each elite California Pinot Noir vineyard. In addition, **I have included reviews of recent vintages from each vineyard and past vintages, in some cases, to judge age-ability.** This compilation along with exhaustive wine reviews are meant to serve as a valuable resource for the most dedicated pinotphiles.

It is important to emphasize that vineyard data is fluid since vines may be removed because of viruses or other diseases, new plantings may be added, vineyard ownership or management may change, and winery clients are often in flux.

A relevant comment is in order regarding wine scores. As many of you have probably noticed, there has been an inflation of California Pinot Noir scores in the past few years. In the early 2000s, a California Pinot Noir that scored 90 or above was considered exceptional and relatively rare. Scores above 94 were almost unheard of. Admittedly, the overall quality of California Pinot Noir has increased over recent years but now some wine critics are eager to award California Pinot Noirs scores in the 96-99 range although I find there are extremely few wines deserving of this rare accolade of extraordinary quality.

I bring this up because you will find a large number of California Pinot Noirs receiving high scores from me in this listing of elite California Pinot Noir vineyards. That is primarily due to the fact the wines were carefully chosen based on my experience with the vineyard and its producers, and do not represent a random sampling. Older vintages came from my temperature-controlled cellar where they rested since purchase and in most cases were acquired directly from wineries upon release.

I am now thoroughly convinced that to obtain the full experience of most California Pinot Noir wines, you should not drink them immediately upon opening. I do taste wines right after popping the cork and some show their pedigree immediately but more often than not they are much better when tasted at least 6 hours later or even the following day. This experience was particularly evident with the 2019 vintage Pinot Noirs reviewed for this issue. This presents some logistic problems when you want a Pinot Noir with dinner. I would suggest you open the bottle in the late morning and sample the wine (about 2 oz), then put the cork back in until dinner. The other option is to decant the wine and put it back in the bottle with a cork. I can't tell you how often a wine improves with exposure to oxygen over the course of several hours. Balanced wines will still be superb the following day.

Since many California Pinot Noir wines have over 14.0% or even 14.5% ABV, drink them at 63°F rather than room temperature to avoid the possible perception of alcoholic heat that can accompany a warmer wine. Pinot Noirs with under 13% ABV are rarely out of balance enough to detect alcoholic heat, but the problem with these wines can be underripe fruit and resulting green or herbal messages.

This extensive listing of vineyards is split into three parts. Part I will be offered in this issue and Parts II and III will be presented in succession in subsequent issues. Here is a listing of all my Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards (Parts I, II, and III).

Outline of Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards

Part I: North Coast

Anderson Valley

Ferrington Vineyard

Maggy Hawk Vineyard

Morning Dew Ranch

One Acre Vineyard

Savoy Vineyard

Weir Vineyard

Wendling Vineyard

Sonoma Coast

B.A. Thieriot Vineyard

Coastlands Vineyard

Hellenthal Vineyard

Hirsch Vineyard

McDougall Ranch

Occidental Ridge Vineyard

Pastorale Vineyard

Rice-Spivak Vineyard

Sonatera Vineyard

Summa Vineyard

Tilton Hill Vineyard

The Haven Vineyard

Walala Vineyard

Wayfarer Vineyard

Petaluma Gap

Gap's Crown Vineyard

Terra De Promissio Vineyard

Part II North Coast

Russian River Valley

Allen Vineyard

Arrendell Vineyard

Dehlinger Estate Vineyard

Dutton Ranch Jentoft Vineyard

Olivet Lane Vineyard

Porter Creek Hillside Vineyard

Quail Hill Vineyard

Ritchie Vineyard

Rochioli Vineyard

Soul Patch Vineyard

Trenton Estate Vineyard

Other North Coast appellations

Cohn Vineyard

Devil's Gulch Vineyard

Donum Ranch Vineyard

Grace Benoist Ranch Vineyard

Hanzell Estate Vineyard

Haynes Vineyard

Part III Central Coast

Santa Cruz Mountains

Lester Family Vineyard

Mount Eden Estate Vineyard

Rhys Alpine Vineyard

Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard

Windy Oaks Estate Schultze Family Vineyard

Santa Lucia Highlands

Garys' Vineyard

Morgan Double L Vineyard

Pisoni Estate Vineyard

Tondre Grapefield

Sta. Rita Hills

Domaine De La Cote

Clos Pepe Vineyard

Fe Ciega Vineyard

Fiddlestix Vineyard

Sanford & Benedict Vineyard

Sea Smoke Vineyard

Other Central Coast appellations

Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley

Calera Jensen Vineyard, Mt. Harlan

Hoffman Mountain Ranch Vineyard, Paso Robles

Rosemary's Vineyard, Arroyo Grande

If you were to fill your cellar with Pinot Noirs from these vineyards made by the featured producers, I guarantee you would have a cellar to not only brag about but one that will bring you years of marvelous drinking pleasure.



Hellenthal Vineyard

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards Part I: North Coast - Anderson Valley

“While California is unlikely to ever formally recognize these rock star vineyards, that doesn’t mean we can’t.”

Kathleen Wilcox

Anderson Valley

Ferrington Vineyard

Owners: Schoeneman family

Acres: 74 (45 acres of Pinot Noir, 16 acres of Chardonnay, 12 acres of Gewürztraminer and an acre of the original Sauvignon Blanc).

Years planted: The vineyard was first planted in 1969 by Balvern Vineyards, then sold to Dr. Richard Ferrington in the 1980s, and subsequently acquired by Santa Rosa dermatologist Dr Kurt Schoeneman in 1996 who upgraded the vineyard with the assistance of noted viticulturist Norman Kobler. The modern plantings of Pinot Noir date to 1997.

Location: Just outside the town of Boonville in the southeastern part of the Anderson Valley.

Aspect: A complex array of steep slopes and facings at 300 to 500 feet elevation.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 113, 114, 115, 667, 777, and 943. Pommard, Wädenswil 2A, DRC suitcase selection and faux 828.

Soils: Decomposed sandstone, clay and rocks.

Vines: Bilateral cordon trellis, rootstocks 101-14 and SO4.

Farming: Managed by Kurt Schoeneman and Paul Ardzooni. The vines are irrigated.

Winery clients past or present: Arista Winery, Baxter Vinery, Borne, Breggo Cellars, Daniel, Davies, FEL Wines, Flowers, Harmonique, Hess Collection, La Rochelle Winery, Londer Vineyards, MacPhail, Philo Ridge Vineyards, Saxon Brown, Schramsberg, Texture and Twomey and Williams Selyem (the original buyers).

Comments: The owners of Ferrington Vineyard launched their own label, Fathers & Daughters, with their release of a 2012 Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the vineyard. John Ferrington died tragically in 2001.



2017 Texture Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 451 cases, \$75. Pommard (primarily), faux 828 and 777 clones, 100% de-stemmed. Aged 10 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Very enjoyable nose with primarily savory aromas of earth, underbrush and allspice. Fresh and vivid fruit flavors including cherry, strawberry and blueberry with well-matched modest tannins. The wine is not all about fruit with an appealing earthiness. Gracious in texture with long, assertive finish. An excellent depiction of this vineyard's terroir.* **93**

2018 Williams Selyem Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$85. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Considerable floral perfume is accented with aromas of Bing cherry, raspberry, earthy flora and rocky soil. Delicious stream of black cherry, boysenberry, iron, truffle and spice flavors that are backed by modest tannins. The balance is impeccable and the finish is crazy long. When I tasted the wine the following day from a previously opened bottle, I exclaimed, WOW! The best Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir I have ever experienced.* **97**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/69/.

Maggy Hawk Vineyard

Owner: Jackson Family Wines

Acres: 58

Year planted: 2000

Location: The “deep end” of the Anderson Valley amongst towering coastal redwoods. One of the closest vineyards to the Pacific Ocean in the Anderson Valley (16 miles).

Aspect: A complex array of steep slopes and facings at 300 to 500 feet elevation.

Pinot Noir clones: Several distinct blocks of clones including Pommard, Wädenswil 2A, and Dijon 113, 115, 667, and 777.

Soils: Well-drained, , low-nutrient, decomposed sandstone (Bearwallow and Wolfey).

Vines: Spacing 8' x 5' to 9' x 5', with 978-1102 vines per acre on VSP trellises.

Farming: The vineyard is often subjected to wind and fog, and an early threat of rain and frost. The vines struggle to ripen with yields often less than 2 tons per acre. Management lives on site.

Winery clients: None, a monopole.

Comments: Maggy Hawk is named after one of Barbara Banke's favorite winning thoroughbred horses. The bottlings are named after thoroughbred horses including Jolie, Afleet, Unforgettable, Hawkster, Graceful Lady, and Stormin'. For many years, the bottlings were often primarily single clone Pinot Noir but this has been modified more recently. The Jolie bottling of clone 115 has always been my favorite. A second label, WindRacer Pinot Noir, is also produced and sourced from Maggy Hawk Vineyard. A Pinot Noir Blanc was offered from Edmeades Vineyard under the Maggy Hawk label in 2018. Grapes have been sourced since the 2017 vintage for a Dundee Hills Pinot Noir under the Maggy Hawk label.



2011 Maggy Hawk Jolie Maggy Hawk Estate Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 242 cases. Primarily clone 115. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose reminds of an excursion into the forest with aromas of wild berries, earthy flora and damp bark. Still offering a good amount of lip-smacking dark fruit sap. The tannins and oak have dwindled and the fruit is somewhat faded but this is a highly enjoyable old wine experience with the aged patina that pinotphiles enjoy* **92**

2018 Maggy Hawk Jolie Maggy Hawk Estate Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 484 cases, \$65. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of Bing cherry, raspberry, sap and spice. Delicious, mouth filling flavors of black cherry and raspberry saturate the palate with goodness. Very polished in the mouth, with buried tannins and a vibrant acid backbone. Everything works in harmony so that the wine can be thoroughly enjoyed now. Fabulous when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle.* **97**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/978/.

Morning Dew Ranch

Owner: Founder Burt Williams of Williams Selyem fame sold the ranch to Napa Valley's Castello di Amorosa in 2016 (asking price was \$1,920,000).

Acres: 13

Years planted: 1999-2001.

Location: "Deep end" of the Anderson Valley reached by an old logging road off Highway 128 near Philo.

Aspect: 20% sloping, south-facing hillside at 660-850 feet elevation.

Pinot Noir clones: Pommard, Mariafeld (32), Dijon 115, 777 and faux 828, a DRC-La Tâche selection and a Rochioli selection thought to be Pommard 5.

Soils: Silty Franciscan clay underlain with sandstone.

Vines: 8' x 4' spacing, VSP trellising, spur pruned.

Farming: Very limited irrigation after the vines were established.

Winery clients: Drew Family Cellars is the only winery client currently. Previous clients included Brogan Cellars, Williams Selyem (last vintage 2016), Whitcraft Winery and Woodenhead.

Comments: When Burt Williams retired from Williams Selyem in 2007, he began to look for property for a vineyard. He noted, "I couldn't afford a property in the Russian River Valley because we (Williams Selyem) made it too popular (laugh)." Burt produced a Morning Dew Ranch Pinot Noir in 2008 and 2009, with the 2009 vintage becoming the last wine he ever crafted. Castello di Amorosa is currently offering a 2018 Morning Dew Ranch Pinot Noir (\$75) but I have not sampled the wine.



2009 Morning Dew Ranch Jan's Cuvée Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13,6% alc. *Aromas of blackest cherry and toasty oak. Richly appointed flavors of darkest cherry and strawberry and purple berry. Still fresh and giving, with a harmonious mouthfeel, and a clean and ephemeral finish. I have had multiple bottles of this wine and there is some bottle variation. If you have any of this last wine Burt Williams made, I would drink up with a toast to Burt.* **93**

2015 Drew Morning Dew Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 75 cases, \$60. Rochioli and La Tache suitcase selections. 50% whole cluster, native fermentations. Aged 11 months in Francois Frères oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Gorgeous nose with soaring aromas of bing cherry, pomegranate and sous-bois. Velvety and lush in the mouth, with a mid-weight core of delicious red fruits that are vivid and charged with goodness. This wine is very classy, displaying impeccable balance and a memorably long finish. Reviewed July 2017.* **96**

2016 Williams Selyem Burt Williams Morning Dew Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., \$85. Aged 16 months in 57% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. This is an extremely easy-drinking wine showing exceptional harmony. The aromas of cherry and cardamom lead to a light to-mid-weight styled wine that is cherry-driven with added flavors of tobacco and licorice. The gossamer tannins make for a gracious mouthfeel and the finish is long and highly gratifying. Reviewed May 25, 2020.* **94**

2019 Drew Morning Dew Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$70. Rochioli and faux 828 (La Tâche) selections. Native yeast, 25% whole cluster fermentation. Aged in 20% new and 80% seasoned French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Dreamy aromas of red cherry and strawberry with a touch of barrel spice and sandalwood. Light to mid-weight in style and elegant in character, with red and blue fruits underlain with perky acidity. The wine finishes better than it enters, ending with length and good cut. Some might find the fruit a bit shallow but I like the gentle nature of the wine.* **92**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/340/.

One Acre Vineyard

Owner: Littorai (purchased in 2016 from the original owner, Rich Savoy, who called it Deer Meadows)

Acres: Deer Meadows Vineyard was 8.5 acres out of which Littorai purchased one acre of fruit and produced the One Acre bottling initially (see details below)

Years planted: Originally planted in 1986 and replanted in 2005 due to phylloxera infestation, with additional plantings through the years.

Location: Northeast of Booneville.

Aspect: Hilltop at 1,600 feet elevation. Gently rolling, peaceful setting.

Pinot Noir clones: Wädenswil 2A, Dijon 114, 115, 667, 777, faux 828 and Swan (One Acre). Dijon 667, 777 and Swan (The Return).

Soils: Bearwallow loam over marine origin sandstone.

Vines: 8' x 4' spacing, VSP trellis.

Farming: Organic and biodynamic methods, not certified.

Winery clients: None, a monopole.

Comments: In 1993, One Acre was the first vineyard-designated Pinot Noir produced by Littorai. Before acquiring the vineyard in 2016, Littorai purchased fruit by a by-the-acre contract, the first of its kind in California. The complete history of the vineyard as told to me by Ted Lemon is complicated.. The actual rows from which the One Acre Pinot Noir was produced migrated over the years so that different bits and pieces were used because Rich Savoy wanted Ted Lemon to try another clone or other reasons. The “pool” for One Acre was always the same 3 acres with a continuous exposure and always produced from one acre of vines. The actual mileage is now 3 acres. It became evident with the first vintage after purchase (2017) of the 3 acres, that the 2 acres located at the highest elevation of the property that had a different soil type and a very different aspect, slope and exposure had a personality of its own. The wine produced from these 2 acres is therefore bottled as The Return, in testimony to the fact that the purchase of the property was really a chance to return to it with a fresh set of eyes. The Return was replanted at the same time as the rest of the property (2005). The remaining 3.5 acres of the original Deer Meadows property goes into the Littorai Les Larmes Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. This acreage is continuously evaluated for quality and potential replanting. So, one can refer to One Acre and The Return as specific blocks within Dear Meadows Vineyard or as separate vineyards. In American winespeak these are blocks, but Ted prefers the word vineyard because of their individuality and the reverence that they hold for him. Both One Acre and The Return labeled vineyard-designated Pinot Noir have been offered by Littorai from this vineyard.



2017 Littorai One Acre Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 12.8% alc., \$90. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. This wine was not appealing upon opening with the fruit seemingly underripe but really blossomed the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Delightful aromas of cherry, strawberry, spice and tilled earth. Mid-weight flavors of red cherry, strawberry, a dark red grape, showing a good attack and a satisfying finish. Very elegant in style with fruit flavors perched just under the peak of ripeness. This wine is a perfect example of the challenges judging a Pinot Noir just after the cork is pulled. This wine underwent a dramatic transition over night.* **94**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/209/.

Savoy Vineyard

Owner: Cliff Lede since 2011. The vineyard was originally established by Rich Savoy.

Acres: 44 with 34 sub-blocks.

Years planted:

1991: 5 acres of Pinot Noir and 5 acres of Chardonnay

1992: additional 10 acres of Pinot Noir and 15 acres of Chardonnay

1994: 5 acres of Pinot Noir. Some Chardonnay acreage has been grafted over to Pinot Noir so the vineyard is now split between 29 acres of Pinot Noir and 15 acres of Chardonnay.

Location: Northwest of the town of Philo in the cooler end of the Anderson Valley above the Navarro River, just across the old-growth stand of redwoods known as Hendy Woods State Park.

Aspect: Gently sloping southwest-facing terrain at 200-320 feet elevation. Protected on two sides so the vineyard is warmer than most of its neighbors.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 113, 114, 115, 667, 777, Wädenswil 2A, Pommard, Calera, Martini 13 and 15.

Soils: Sandy loam and clay loam.

Vines: 7' x 5' spacing with a VSP trellis system.

Farming: Littorai's Ted Lemon has overseen a transition to organic and biodynamic management.

Winery clients: Littorai, Radio-Coteau, Auteur, Peay, Failla, and several others in the past. The owner bottles Pinot Noir and Chardonnay under the FEL label.



2015 Littorai Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., \$75. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The aromatic goodness explodes over time in the glass, offering hi-tone black cherry and spice cabinet aromas. Intense and sappy, with flavors of black cherry, blueberry, pomegranate, raspberry and spice*

along with a earthy nuance. A sophisticated wine that satisfies from attack to finish and offering impeccable balance. This wine has that ephemeral Pinot Noir quality that is the Holy Grail of vintners. Reviewed January 2018. 97

2018 FEL Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$70. Moderate garnet color in the glass. A party of dark red berry fruits fill the aroma profile. Better on the palate, with a charge of dark red cherry and raspberry fruits exhibiting a good attack, mid-palate grandeur and some finishing generosity. Excellent uplifting acidity and minor tannins. This wine wants to be your friend! Even more enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 93

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/70/.

Weir Vineyard

Owners: Bill and Susan Weir

Acres: 7 acres of Pinot Noir

Years planted: 1992 (East Vineyard) and 2000 (West Vineyard)

Location: 7 miles south of Boonville just outside the Anderson Valley AVA and in the Yorkville Highlands AVA.

Aspect: 850 to 1,000 feet elevation, surrounded by heavily wooded forest.

Pinot Noir clones: DRC suitcase selection from Mt. Eden, Wädenswil 2A, Pommard 4 from Rochioli Riverblock.

Soils: A melange of soils that fall into the Yorkville series. Deep, well-drained, schist, brittle sandstone and other sedimentary and metamorphic rocks including quartz. Some percentage of loamy clay keeps the soils united.

Vines: 8' x 5' spacing, VSP trellis.

Farming: Minimal irrigation.

Winery clients: Williams Selyem has been a long-standing client. Others have included Baxter Winery, Bink Wines, Bluxome Street Winery, Brooks Note, Drew Family Cellars, Furthermore, Gabrielli, Roadhouse Winery, SPELL Wines, Talisman and Toulouse.

Comment: A tiny block of Nebbiolo is planted as well.



2009 SPELL Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$39. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, BBQ rub, and Prada leather coat. Richly appointed with layers of black cherry, purple and black berry and brown sugar flavors framed by energetic tannins. This wine has yet shed its tannins and probably never will leading to more imbalance in this wine as the fruit fades in the future.* **89**

2014 SPELL Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 125 cases, \$48. Rochioli selection, Pommard, Wädenswil 2A and a DRC selection. Aged in 33% new, 33% once-used, and 33% older French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Highly aromatic, with scents of cherry, exotic spices and potpourri. Plenty of flavor packed into a mid-weight style. A captivating wine that features black cherry and black raspberry fruits embellished with a deft touch of oak and a bit of umami. The structured tannins are slightly astringent. The finish is one to celebrate, with an extraordinary black cherry aromatic persistence. This special wine is a cause for celebration. Reviewed June, 2016.* **94**

2016 Brooks Note Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 250 cases, \$44. A Rochioli selection and Wädenswil 2A clone from the eastern block and a DRC selection from the western block. 10% whole cluster. Aged 16 months in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Terrific perfume of black cherry and baking spice aromas that leap from the glass. Light to mid-weight, gloriously fresh flavors of strawberry, cherry, spice and tobacco framed by toned tannins. Lovely balance and a very long, quenching finish. Still pumping out a deep well of fruit pleasure when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. The vintner really hit the mark in this vintage. Reviewed January 2018.* **95**

2019 SPELL Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, black raspberry and earthy flora lead to a mid-weight plus styled wine featuring plenty of tasteful black cherry, boysenberry and Dr. Pepper flavors. Some young tannins prowl the background but are not intrusive. Overall, quite enjoyable.* **93.**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/101/.

Wendling Vineyard

Owner: Paul Ardzooni (Ardzooni Family Wines)

Acres: 20 acres of Pinot Noir

Year planted: 2010

Location: Near the hamlet of Navarro across the road from Kiser Vineyard.

Aspect: A steep, rocky, southwest-facing slope at 335-500 feet elevation, nine miles from the Pacific Ocean. The most northwesterly vineyard in the Anderson Valley AVA.

Pinot Noir clones: Pommard, Dijon 115, faux 828, 943, and 667, and a massale selection from other famous vineyards including an alleged La Tâche selection.

Soils: Well-drained, shallow, sandy loam, sandstone, and shale (Ornbaun, Wolfey, and Bearwallow complexes).

Vines: Littorai E Block is spaced 7' x 3.3', VSP trellis, 1103P, 420 and 3309 rootstocks.

Farming: The vineyard was planted and is farmed with the utmost precision and care by Paul Ardzooni.

Organic and biodynamic farming methods are employed, not certified. The steep terrain obviates the use of machinery for most farming tasks. There are fewer growing degree days here than nearly anywhere on the West Coast resulting in low yields. The elevation allows safety from crippling frost below.

Winery clients: COBB Wines, Coain, Drew Family Cellars, FEL Wines, Littorai, Reeve, Texture Wines, and Westwood Estate. Some production is bottled under the Ardzooni Family Wines label. Littorai's E Block was chosen by Ted Lemon after the owner acknowledged his role in the original development of the property by giving him a choice of all the blocks in the vineyard. Lemon's Block E is one with the lowest vigor and stresses easily with water deficits.

Comments: The vineyard is named for the Wendling family who was one of the founding wine families of the Anderson Valley.



2016 Littorai Wendling Vineyard E Block Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$80. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of purple and black berry, earthy flora and spice cake arrive over time in the glass, showing more appeal the following day from a previously opened bottle. Very savory and earth-toned with fruit flavors of plum and spiced blackberries. A moderately firm tannic backbone supports the discreet fruit load. The most striking feature of this wine is the very long and glorious finish. Considerably more charming when tasted from a previously opened bottle the following day. 93*

2016 Texture Wendling Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 349 cases, \$85. Clones faux 828, 943 and a DRC selection. Native fermentation, aged 10 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of macerated black fruits, prune and oak. A big, full-bodied wine, with ultra ripe flavors of boysenberry, blackberry, black currant and raisin. Silky on the palate with a flood of fruit on the finish. A bold, ripe and fruit-driven style. 90*

2019 Drew Wendling Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$70. Alleged DRC and LaTâche selections. Yield 2 tons per acre. Native yeast, 45% whole cluster fermentation. Aged in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is quite nuanced, with aromas of herb-dusted cherry and raspberry, a grass and floral note, and sweet, burnt tobacco. This is an exceptional wine that offers mid-weight flavors of raspberries and olalliberries with a hint of green tobacco. Very polished in the mouth with integrated tannins and juicy acidity. When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, the wine was extraordinary, offering aromas of dark red cherry and cranberry, earthy flora and pipe smoke. Silken and elegant on the palate with a spectrum of red fruits and a very lengthy finish. My notes say, "fantastic." 96*

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards

Part I: North Coast - Sonoma Coast

“I believe that there are not nearly as many truly great vineyards in the New World as people think, but there are ones that have that mysterious, magical element. Ones that can produce wines with emotional impact.”

James Hall, winemaker

Sonoma Coast

B.A. Thieriot Vineyard

Owner: Bridget Thieriot

Acres: 3.5 acres of Pinot Noir, 5 acres of Chardonnay

Years planted: 3 acres of Pinot Noir (Pommard, Swan, Calera, Dijon 114, 667 and 777) in 1994, and 0.5 acres of Pinot Noir in 1996 (unknown clone).

Location: Southwest of the town of Occidental, across the street from Summa Vineyard.

Aspect: Overlooks the town of Bodega at 900 feet elevation on the cooler side of the hills around Occidental, yet protected from the northwest winds and fog by a ridge to the north.

Pinot Noir clones: Swan, Calera, Pommard, Dijon 114, 667 and 777, and a proprietary clone.

Soils: Goldridge sandy loam over sandstone, Josephine series.

Vines: Spacing 8' x 3', 10' x 3' and 9' x 4'. Rootstocks are 5C, 3309 and 104-14.

Farming: Littorai has a long-term lease on the Pinot Noir and one parcel of Chardonnay, and farms it as it were an estate vineyard using organic and biodynamic methods (not certified). Ulises Valdez & Sons has also been involved in the farming. The most challenging aspects of farming here are the very low yields (20-year average is 1.38 tons per acre), and a typically very cool spring.

Winery clients: Littorai, Rivers-Marie and Senses.

Comments: 5 acres of Chardonnay are planted. The vineyard was originally named simply Thieriot but a divorce by the owners led to a change to the current name.



2012 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., Magnum. Aromas of boysenberry jam, rose petal and tobacco oak become mind-blowing in the glass over time. A beautiful wine offering purple and black berry fruit flavors in a mid-weight package. Nicely balanced with a very suave texture, modest but not egregious tannins, and a beguiling finish filled with succulent fruit. Still of great interest when tasted the subsequent two days from the opened magnum. Built to last another ten years easily. **94**

2014 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., Magnum. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry and dusty rose lead to a middleweight styled wine offering flavors of black cherry, boysenberry and a bit of oak in the background. Seductively silky in the mouth with balanced tannins and a finish bursting with fruit goodness.* **92**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/2/.

Coastlands Vineyard

Owner: Cobb family

Acres: 14.5 acres of Pinot Noir

Years planted: Initially planted by David and Diane Cobb in 1989. Additional vines in the Diane Cobb block were added in 1996.

Location: Wind-swept, marine-influenced ridge 4 miles from the Pacific Ocean in Occidental.

Aspect: Southwest-facing at 900-1,200 feet elevation.

Pinot Noir clones: Mainly Pommard, Martini, Wädenswil and Mt. Eden. The Diane Cobb block has more than 20 clones/selections of Pinot Noir.

Soils: Yorkville and Kneeland sandy loam.

Farming: The challenging site can have periods of spring rain or heavy fog can lead to extremely low, even nonexistent yields in some years.

Winery clients: LaRue and Williams Selyem (until 2001) have produced vineyard-designated Pinot Noir.

Winemaker Ross Cobb produces Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Pinot Noir, Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Diane Block Pinot Noir and Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Old Fir Block Pinot Noir.

Comments: The Diane Cobb block was initially planted by Diane Cobb in 1989 with 20 selections of Pinot Noir in an attempt to determine which Pinot Noir varieties were best for the Coastlands Vineyard. The Diane Block was later expanded with a single selection believed to be among the best among the initial nursery plantings. The Diane Cobb Block consists of 1.5 acres of Coastlands Vineyard. Diane passed away in 2006. Ross Cobb and family pictured below.



2002 Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., Magnum. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of musty wine cellar, dark red cherry and berry, cigar box, burnt wax and dried green herbs. Mid-weight flavors of dark red and black cherry, purple berry, spice complimented by dusty tannins. Still plenty of fruit initially after opening with charm and integrity. Remarkably enjoyable after 19 years. 93*

2017 Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Diane Cobb Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 175 cases, \$120. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lavish aromas of dark red cherry and berry. Impressive attack and length in a middleweight style offering layers of sweet, dark red fruits with an earthy, mineral tone. Some tannin on the backend and gregarious acidity insure a long life ahead. Impeccable harmony and an extremely long finish. Just terrific when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. This one made my heart throb. 96*

2017 Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Old Fir Block Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.1% alc., 175 cases, \$80. *Sourced from a block originally planted in 1999 to Wädenswil and Martini clones. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very pleasant aromas of black cherry, baking spices, and sandalwood becoming more exuberant over time in the glass. Light to mid-weight in style featuring a core of dark cherry underlain with excellent natural acidity and mild tannins. Light on its feet and juicy, with a slightly tart and quenching finish. Builds in welcome richness over time in the glass, and developing an added forest character (fir as the Old Fir Block name implies). 94*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/345/.

Hellenthal Vineyard

Owners: Gard and Lori Hellenthal

Acres: 17: Old Shop Block is 2 acres, 9B and 9D (Elliot) Blocks are 8 acres, House Field Block is 1.5 acres and Home Field Block is 6 acres.

Years planted: 1980 (?1979) - 2001

Location: 5 miles inland from the Pacific coastline, north of Cazadero in the hills, and just east of Hirsch Vineyards. Near the the south fork of the Gualala River.

Aspect: A mixture of hills and canyons at 1,053 feet elevation above the fog line.

Pinot Noir clones: Old Shop Block: own-rooted Calera clone and/or Martini clone. House Field Block: Pommard and Old Shop Block cuttings. Home Field Block: Dijon 114. 9B and (D Blocks: Pommard, Mt. Eden and Old Shop Block cuttings.

Soils: Mixed with fractured sandstone and decompressed sandstone, clay, and Goldridge sandy loam.

Farming: Organically farmed with no irrigation by the owners, particularly Elisa Hellenthal. Some assistance is offered by shared crews from Hirsch Vineyards.

Winery clients: W.H. Smith was the main client for many years ending in 2014. Currently, Ceritas Old Shop Block, WesMar (9B Block), Banshee Wines, MacRostie and RAEN (Home Field Block, currently labeled as Sea Field Vineyard).



2014 Ceritas Old Shop Block Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., \$72. *Only Pinot Noir can give you soaring aromas of black cherry, sous-bois, spice and toast. Very silky on entry with perfectly ripened flavors of dark cherry and raspberry with a trace of dried herbs. Beautifully balanced with pliant tannins and bright acidity and a taunting, orgasmic finish that goes on and on. This wine has all the good things you look for in a Pinot Noir. Reviewed August 2020. 96*

2016 WesMar Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$55. A field blend of Pommard, Mt. Eden and Swan clones planted in the Elliott Block in 1981. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry and rose petal lead to a discreetly concentrated wine featuring riveting flavors of black cherry, kirsch, and spice. The satiny mouthfeel is highly seductive and the gracious tannins make for easy access. The wine's harmony and vigor impress as does the waves of fruit echoing on the glorious finish. This wine takes time to reveal itself and would benefit from decanting. A truly invigorating wine. Reviewed August 2020. 95*

2016 RAEN Home Field Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of red cherry, cranberry and tree sap lead to a lighter-styled wine with primarily red fruit flavors. Elegant and crisp, but somewhat shallow on the mid-palate and finish. Too delicate to satisfy completely. 89*

2017 RAEN Home Field Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$80. Clone 777. Whole cluster, native yeast fermentation. Aged in neutral French oak barrels. Bottled without fining or filtration. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. An elegant, very aromatic and flavorful wine offering aromas and flavors of cherry, strawberry, exotic spices, wild herbs, and forest floor. This is one terrific wine to drink now because of excellent rapport between tannins and acidity. There is clearly a whole cluster foundation that elevates the pedigree of this wine. I literally wanted to drink the entire bottle. Welcoming and amicable when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Reviewed May 2020. 96*

2018 RAEN Sea Field Hellenthal Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$80. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely spiced aromas of dark cherry and pomegranate with a fragrant flower contribution. Elegant and sleek with a hint of whole cluster exotica in a mid-weight style. Earthbound flavors of dark red cherry and boysenberry backed by juicy acidity and supportive tannins that add a hint of astringency. Noticeably more alluring when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 94*

2018 MacRostie Hellenthal Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 311 cases, \$58, screw cap closure. Produced and bottled by MacRostie Winery, Healdsburg, CA. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated with select yeast strains after a 3-day cold soak. Aged 10 months in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Interest array of aromas including black raspberry, spice rub, herbal tea and clay. Very grounded and savory on the palate in a middleweight style, with fruit flavors of blueberry and boysenberry. Some ripe tannins reflect its young life. The finish is exceedingly long. This wine will benefit from decanting. It was much more giving when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 94*

2018 Ceritas Old Shop Block Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., \$85. Ceritas ("sara-toss") is Spanish for mineral expression of the soil. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of dark cherry, red rose in bloom, spice and burnt pipe tobacco. Light to mid-weight in style, with darker red cherry and berry fruit flavors annotated with herbal notes and framed by moderately vigorous tannins that lead to some astringency on the finish. Clearly whole cluster inspired and showing the lighter color and elegance typical of old vine Pinot Noir. 92*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/166/.

Hirsch Vineyard

Owner: David Hirsch

Acres: 72 with 60 distinct blocks

Years planted: 1980-1998 and 2002-2003

Location: 12 miles northwest of Jenner, west of Cazadero, and 3 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean.

Aspect: A series of ridge tops ranging in elevation from 1,200-1,550 feet.

Pinot Noir clones: Primarily Pommard but also Swan, Calera, Mt. Eden, and Dijon 114 and 777.

Soils: Hugo Gravelly loam and Hugo Josephine complex.

Farming: Organic material and biodynamic methods, not certified. Erratic climate with abundant rainfall between October and April, with a dry and desert-like summer. Ten year average yield is 2.58 tons per acre.

Winery clients: Littorai, Failla, and Williams Selyem. Littorai is the longest continuous purchaser of Hirsch Vineyard fruit, starting in 1994. Prior clients have included FEL, Siduri, and Kistler.

Comments: Several Hirsch Estate Pinot Noirs and a Hirsch Estate Chardonnay are produced at a winery on the Hirsch property.



2004 George Vintage II Hirsch Vineyard Block 4A Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., Magnum. Moderately dark reddish brown with a yellow rim. Aromas of pipe smoke and burnt tobacco. Much better on the palate with mid-weight flavors of root beer, cream soda, faded black cherry and a hint of oak spice and vanilla. Drinkable with a citric note on the quenching finish. This wine is past its prime for sure but was a uniquely enjoyable learning experience. **N/R**

2011 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., Magnum. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark wild cherry sprinkled with herbs and flowers. The middleweight flavors of red cherry and strawberry are annotated with spice, thyme and other dried herbs and a dusting of oak. The tannins have completely faded and there is lip-smacking acidity at the end. Complex and savory rather than directly fruity. **92**

2017 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., \$85. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of mixed berries including strawberry framed by sandy-grain, firm and focused tannins and bright acidity. Nicely composed, continuing to evolve and develop additional nuances over time in the glass. This one needs more time in the cellar. **91**

2018 Failla Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$90. Dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of cherry, purple berry, spice, tilled earth, and a compliment of oak. Mid-weight plus in style, with flavors of purple and black berries annotated with a herbaceous, cedar thread. The fruit builds in intensity over time in the glass. There is a good cut of acidity and some tannin-driven astringency on the long finish. More appealing when sampled the following day from a previously opened bottle but the green thread remained. **90**

2019 Hirsch Vineyards Bohan-Dillon Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., \$38. This wine reflects the full spectrum of the vineyard. The label depicts Bobo the cat who prowls the vineyard. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of strawberry, cherry, underbrush, sandalwood and

vanilla mocha arrive over time in the glass. Lighter in weight, with juicy flavors of strawberry, red cherry and cranberry. Easy to cozy up to with gentle tannins, a hint of complimentary oak and a modest, but spirited finish. **90**

2018 Hirsch Vineyards San Andreas Fault Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., \$60. The San Andreas Fault lies 25 miles from the vineyard. The Fault defines all aspects of Hirsch Vineyard. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Complex nose exhibiting aromas of raspberry coulis, black cherry cola, rose petal, earthy flora and See's dark chocolate. Very clean, balanced and approachable in a mid-weight style with flavors of boysenberry and black raspberry accented with a herbal thread in the background, all entwined with modest tannins. The wine is a bit shallow on the mid-palate and the lacks some length on the purple berry driven finish.* **91**

2018 Hirsch Vineyards East Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 56 cases, \$85.. This block is sheltered from the coastal fog. The vines are stressed by phylloxera and grow in shallow soils resulting in very low yields. A cellar worthy , masculine expression of the vineyard. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A dark fruit profile dominates the nose and palate. The wine is uniquely rustic, animale and gutsy with a husky tannic backbone that keeps the fruit in line. Very sleek and silky in texture with a finish that just won't quit. A very interesting and distinctive wine that I thoroughly enjoyed.* **94**

2018 Hirsch Vineyards West Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.2% alc., 512 cases, \$85. *This block is located on rolling hills of the westerly part of the vineyard. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The aromas have a comforting, peaceful tone including red cherry and peppery herbs. Rather delicate and elegant with red cherry and raspberry flavors underlain with a savory herbal thread. Very bright and agreeable, yet showing enough chewy tannin to align the fruit.* **93**

2018 Hirsch Vineyards Raschen Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., 512 cases, \$75.. Henry Raschen (1834-1937) was a painter of the American West and lived on the land that is now Hirsch Vineyards. This block is at the vineyard's highest elevation. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Attractive aromas of black cherry, dark chocolate and male sweat. Polished and balanced in a mid-weight style, with an array of interesting flavors including black cherry, pomegranate, exotic spice, earth and toast. Nicely composed with supportive tannins and giving at this stage.* **93**

2018 Hirsch Vineyards Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 732 cases, \$85. A barrel selection from the most evocative and expressive vineyard parcels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas have a serious tone and include blueberry, blackberry and Asian five spice. A hi-collar, connoisseur's wine with delicious flavors of blueberry and boysenberry backed by a tannic structure that suggests age ability. Very seamless in character, offering more nuance over time. I liked it the more I tasted it. When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, it brought chills like hearing the Star Spangled Banner at a sporting event. This beauty will reward cellaring and most certainly is a 20-year wine.* **95**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/9/.

McDougall Ranch Vineyard

Owners: Mac (late) and Barbara McDougall

Acres: 8 acres of Pinot Noir

Year planted: 1998

Location: On Sonoma's far west coast, 3,3 miles from the Pacific coastline in Cazadero, 1.7 miles north of Hirsch Vineyards.

Aspect: High atop a South to southwest-facing ridge above the fog line at 935-1030 feet elevation. The vineyard overlooks the Pacific coastline and the Gualala River.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 114 and 115.

Soils: Greywacke, sandstone, and shale derived from marine sediments.

Vines: 8' 5' spacing, 44-53 rootstock.

Farming: Managed by Ulises Valdez & Sons Vineyard Management.

Winery clients: Alden Ali, Drew Family Cellars, Dutton-Goldfield (one of the winery's first single-vineyard Pinot Noir wines in their portfolio), and Kutch Wines.

Comment: Barbara McDougall went to high school with noted Sonoma Coast pioneering winegrower Warren Dutton.



2016 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.0% alc., \$59. *I have drank multiple bottles of this wine since I was so overcome with Pinot Love when I first reviewed the wine after release, I bought several bottles. Every bottle has been exceptional. Briefly, the wine checks all the boxes: exotic aromas, delicious spiced black cherry flavor, silky, greased lightning mouthfeel, and dreamy harmony. The wine is so well balanced it will easily last another ten years. A heartthrob Pinot Noir. Sadly, I am down to my last bottle. 98*

2017 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 550 cases, \$59. 100% whole cluster, native fermentation, aged on the lees without racking for 11 months in 10% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas of dark cherry, burnt tobacco, woodland spice and bark really draw you into the glass. Seamless in a mid-weight style, with flavors of spiced dark red and purple fruits that dance on the palate. More demure in this vintage, but exhibiting cohesive tannins and an awesome finish showing echos of aromatic goodness. Superb in every way. Even more demonstrative when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Reviewed January 2019. 95*

2018 Dutton-Goldfield McDougall Ranch Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$68. 100% de-stemmed. 7-day cold soak. Aged 18 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Sumptuous aromas of black cherry, wild blueberry, nori, rose petal and cocoa. Mid-weight plus in style, offering good grip and intensity of red grape, blackberry, blueberry and boysenberry fruit flavors. A charismatic and seductive wine with an extremely long and cleansing finish that lasts over 30 seconds. Stairway to heaven. 96*

2019 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$65. *Medium garnet color in the glass. A whole cluster inspired nose reveals alluring aromas of dark berries, flower garden, burnt tobacco and sweet pipe smoke. The mid-weight flourish of olalliberry, blackberry and black raspberry fruits really engage the palate. There are added accents of tobacco, violets, and sap. Bold, yet refined, still showing some young tannins and will need a few years to fully incorporate the tannins and integrate the whole cluster character. McDougall Ranch always stands out in the Kutch lineup and this wine is no exception. The finish sends the drinker back again and again for another sip they cannot resist. May be more deserving of a higher score down the road. 95*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/102/.

Occidental Ridge Vineyard

Owners: Richard and Darla Radcliffe acquired the vineyard in 2004.

Acres: 22 acres of Pinot Noir

Years planted: Developed by the late Warren Dutton from 1999-2000.

Location: High above the town of Occidental in West Sonoma County, 7 miles from the Pacific coastline.

Aspect: Wind-swept, sun-drenched promontory at 800 feet elevation, gently sloping to the Northwest. A rare warm spot in a cool region with moderate mid-day temperatures.

Pinot Noir clones: Three equal blocks of Dijon 115, 667, and 777 and a variety of heritage selections.

Soils: Goldridge with great balance of water-holding capacity and drainage.

Vines: 8' x 4' spacing, 1361 vines per acre. Vines are cane pruned and vertically positioned with three sets of guide wires. Rootstock is 101-14.

Farming: Farming is based on the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices. There are little waves and rises in the vineyard with different soil profiles and each of these areas is managed differently in terms of vine care and decisions whether to irrigate or dry farm. Canopy management receives the most emphasis through aggressive shoot thinning, leaf removal in the fruiting zone and dropping of excessive fruit. The cover crop is planted in the autumn and is mowed and finally plowed under in the spring. Solar power is used for much of the operation along with gravity-fed rainfall capture. The vineyard is susceptible to challenging conditions during bloom and as a result, annual yields vary wildly from year to year from 9 tons to 24 tons for the entire vineyard.

Winery clients: Failla, Rivers-Marie



2017 Rivers-Marie Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 240 cases, \$50. Some whole cluster inclusion. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very engaging aromas of blackest cherry, cola and dark red rose petal. A sleek array of dark red and black stone and berry fruits offer considerable pleasure and excellent energy. Mid-weight in extraction, with tender tannins, a shadow of nutty oak, and a seductively silken mouthfeel. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the composure was exquisite and the finish gained even more length. Reviewed May 2019. 94*

2018 Failla Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$60. Produced and bottled by Ehren Jordan Wine Cellars, St. Helena, CA. *Reserve, but pleasing aromas of dark red berries and tropical fruit punch. Mid-weight plus in concentration, delivering an explosion of vivid red and dark purple berry fruit flavors. Super-succulent, reminding me of my favorite olalliberry pie. Very plush on the palate, with minimal tannins and a very long, virile finish.* **94**

2019 Rivers-Marie Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$60. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose takes time to open, offering plenty of bright cherry, exotic spice and rose petal aromas. A discreetly concentrated style, with elegantly-composed flavors of cherry and blueberry kissed with oak. This wine is heavily invested in oak initially, but by the following day when sampled from a previously opened bottle, the wine was singing on all high notes with only a whisper of oak and finished with fruit-laden, memorable goodness. This beauty needs a little time in the cellar.* **95**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/369/.

Pastorale Vineyard

Owner: Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyards

Acres: 56.3: 34.5 acres of Pinot Noir, 8.9 acres under redevelopment planting of Pinot Noir, and 11.9 acres of Chardonnay

Years planted: Initially in 2000 but ongoing

Location: The vineyard surrounds the winery in Freestone, 8 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and north of Bodega Highway. The site was a former dairy farm.

Aspect: Steep hillsides

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 667, 777, faux 828 and 458, and Calera, Swan, Mt. Eden, "Pisoni", and 32 (Roederer).

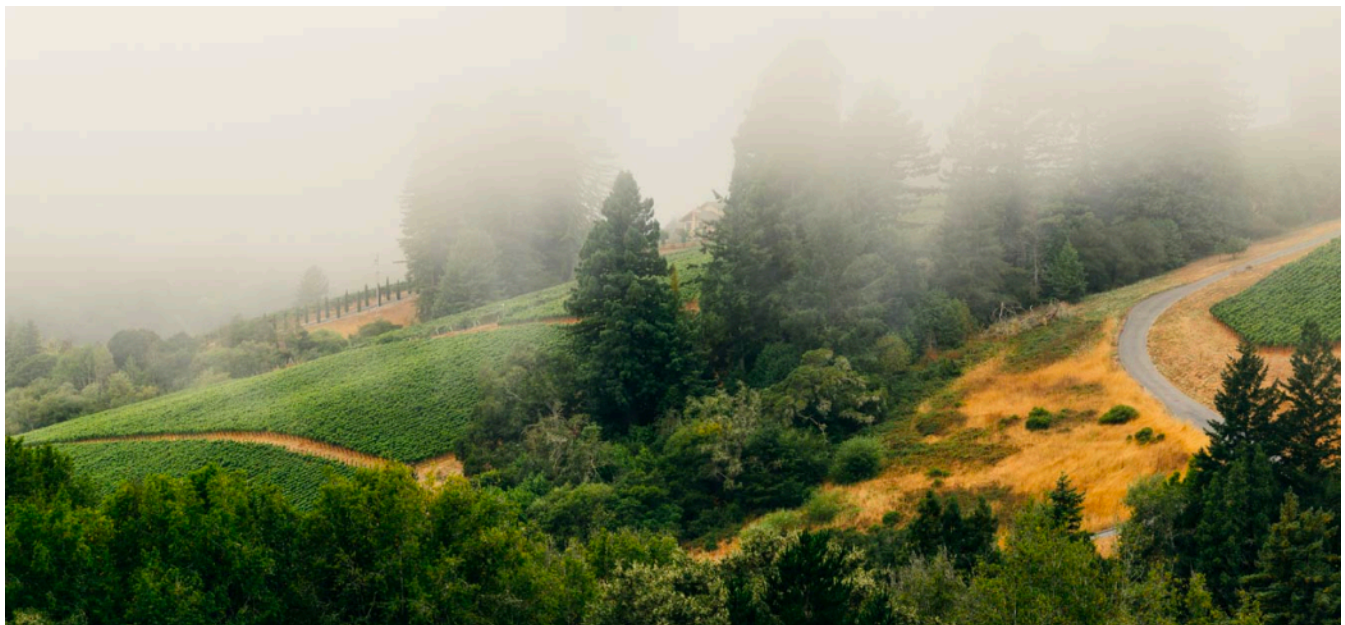
Soil: Goldridge sandy loam

Vines: 5' x 3', 4' x 4', and 7' x 4' spacing.

Farming: Sustainable. The site is cold, wet and windy with fog often lingering into the early afternoon so winegrowing here is marginal and challenging. Adaptation was required early on to adapt farming practices to the environment and climate. It took five years to harvest the first crop.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comment: The Chardonnay plantings include clones 76, Mt. Eden, Montra and Maro.



2015 Freestone Vineyards Pastorale Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$60. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of blueberry, blackberry syrup and forest path. A husky wine with an intense core of ultra-ripe fruit flavors including black raspberry, black grape and blackberry framed by*

restrained tannins. A very slight herbaceous oak note is present. A fruit-driven wine from a warm vintage that should be drunk now. 90

2018 Joseph Phelps Vineyards Pastorale Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$90. Estate grown, produced and bottled by Joseph Phelps Vineyards, Freestone, CA. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Beautifully perfumed with aromas of black cherry, dark strawberry, Asian 5-spice and floral goodness. Mid-weight plus in style, offering a plethora of black cherry, black raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors that really grab ahold with intensity. Impressive polished mouthfeel with suede-like tannins. The finish is noteworthy for its length and generosity. 95*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/595/.

Rice-Spivak Vineyard

Owners: Russell Rice and spouse Dr. Helen Spivak

Acres: 6, all Pinot Noir

Year planted: 1999

Location: South of the town of Sebastopol and six miles inland from the Pacific Coast. The vineyard is influenced by the marine climate.

Aspect: North-facing site at 240 feet elevation

Pinot Noir clones: Swan, Dijon 115, and 667

Soils: Goldridge sandy loam with volcanic ash

Farming: Guided by Ross Cobb of COBB Wines.

Winery clients: Ross Cobb of COBB Wines has an exclusive lease on this vineyard so it is essentially an estate vineyard for COBB Wines. Ross has worked with the vineyard since 2003 and has bottled a single-vineyard Pinot Noir from the vineyard since 2009. Winery clients have included LaRue Wines, Banshee Cellars, LaRue Wines and Relic Wine Cellars.



2008 COBB Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 500 cases, Magnum. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Purple berry and grape aromas with a hint of spice arise from the glass initially, with a smoky contribution over time. The core of mid-weight, juicy cherry fruit is very satisfying and brought into focus*

by excellent underlying acidity. The tannins have receded and there is some persistence on the finish. There is definitely some smoke taint present but an inexperienced Pinot Noir drinker may not notice it. Drink up before the fruit fades. **91**

2012 COBB Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 225 cases, Magnum. Light garnet color in the glass. Complex nose replete with aromas of red cherry, spice, burnt tobacco, forest floor accompanied by some oak-driven vanilla and espresso. Light to mid-weight in style offering juicy flavors of red cherry, red raspberry, baking spices, and the slightest herbaceous tone. Elegant in character with gossamer tannins and a slightly tart red cherry finish that has good length. Still enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle indicating significantly more life ahead. **94**

2016 LaRue Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., 150 cases, \$70. Dijon clones and a Swan selection. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of fresh cherry and baking spices. Delicious flavors of cherry and raspberry with an appealing accent of spice. Silky tannins, with concealed oak, and an extremely long finish that seems to last a full minute. Reviewed July 2019. **93**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/835/.

Sonatera Vineyard

Owners: The vineyard was developed by Marne Coggan, Serena Laurie and Alan Baker. Cartograph Wines purchased the vineyard in 2016.

Acres: 9.7 acres of Pinot Noir

Years planted: 1999: 8.6 acres, 2003: 1.1 acres

Location: Quite away southeast of Sebastopol in the Sebastopol Hills subregion of the Russian River Valley. The vineyard is within the area that Gallo petitioned into the Russian River Valley. Because of its far southern location in the Russian River Valley AVA, the weather is more related to the Sonoma Coast and Petaluma Gap AVAs than the Russian River Valley AVA. The vineyard is adjacent Rice-Spivak Vineyard but Sonatera is more on a hill making the fruit profile different.

Aspect: The hill slopes from the highest point at 290 feet elevation to the lowest point at 205 feet elevation. Temperatures tend to peak around 11:00 am and as the winds from the Petaluma Gap kick in, the temperature drops sometimes as much as 10°F.

Pinot Noir clones: Pommard, Dijon 115, 667, and 777

Soils: 100% Goldridge sandy loam

Vines: 8' x 5' spacing, north-south row orientation, VSP trellis, cane-pruned. Rootstocks are 101-14 with a small block of 3709.

Farming: California Certified Sustainable Winegrowing. State-of-the-art vineyard management system by Ranch Systems that monitors soil moisture, temperature, humidity, radiation, wind, degree days, and well water depth. Irrigation schedules are automated through this system and can be controlled in real-time by phone. The site is late to bloom and late to harvest with yields pretty meager at 2-3 tons per acre.

Winery clients: Siduri until the sale of the vineyard. Soliste continues as the sole winery client.

Comments: Sonatera was trademarked so Soliste could continue using the legacy name for their bottlings, and continue to work with their original blocks. Cartograph calls their wines from the property "Cartograph Estate." Soliste Pinot Noir bottlings from Sonatera Vineyard are labeled Sonatera, Sonatera T Block, Solitaire, Renaissance, L'Eternal, Extravagant, and Grands Charmes.



2013 Soliste Solitaire Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 650 cases, Magnum. Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black raspberry, black grape, gravelly earth and barrel vanilla. Exquisitely balanced in a very easy going and ephemeral style, featuring flavors of boysenberry, blackberry and spice. A beautifully crafted, sensual wine that is expansive in the mouth. No hard edges or complaints. Still exceptional and very easy to cozy up to when tasted two days after opening. **95**

2016 Soliste Sonatera Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., 45 cases. Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose drove me crazy with soaring aromas of dark cherry, strawberry, cola, and grilled mushroom aromas. The mid-weight fruit really makes an entrance, with bombastic flavors of black cherry, strawberry, spice and savory herbs. Minor tannins and a slight citrus note mark the extended finish. **94**

2015 Soliste Renaissance Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5 % alc., 47 cases. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The aromas arrive over time in the glass, offering enticing scents of black cherry, raspberry, spice drawer, dried herbs and a whiff of oak. Striking mid-weight flavors of black raspberry and boysenberry that saturate the mid palate and carry through a very long and glorious finish. There is but a whisper of oak and silky tannins. **93**

2016 Soliste Renaissance Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 45 cases. Moderate garnet color in the glass. As oxygen works its magic, the nose explodes with delightful aromas of black cherry, rose petal and barbecue rub. A very sophisticated wine with enviable harmony, offering middleweight flavors of dark stone and berry fruits. There is but a whisper of supportive oak, felty tannins, and an extremely persistent finish that lingers to the next sip. Even more extravagant when tasted from a previously opened bottle later in the day and the following day. **96**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/597/.

Summa Vineyard

Owners: Thomas Rivers Brown and Genevive Marie Thomas bought the original old vine plantings in September 2010, and leases the young vine plantings (2005-2009) from the previous owners, Scott and Joan Zeller, who were the proprietors since 1982.

Acres: 6.5, all Pinot Noir

Years planted: 1979: original planting of 2 acres of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer by Steve Young and his daughter. The entire 2 acres was soon grafted over completely to Pinot Noir. 1998: 3 acres of Pinot Noir established on resistant rootstock with original vine cuttings. These vines are referred to as young vines. 2000, 2005, and 2009: more old vine cuttings interplanted among old vines.

Location: West of the town of Occidental on Taylor Lane, six miles inland from the Pacific coastline. Nearby vineyards include Taylor Lane, B.A. Thieriot, La Boheme, Taylor Ridge, Occidental and Maybach.

Aspect: The vineyard straddles a ridge top.

Pinot Noir clones: Undetermined but thought to be a Swan selection.

Soils: Gravelly, well-drained

Vines: Original vine spacing was 8 x 12" but interplanting has occurred, VSP trellis.

Farming: Brown has improved the farming by instituting many modern viticulture innovations. Scott Zeller manages the vineyard day-to-day as he lives next door.

Winery clients: The first wines from Summa Vineyard were produced by the now closed Sea Ridge Winery in the 1980, but Williams Selyem made the vineyard famous, releasing the first California Pinot Noir priced at \$100 from the 1991 vintage. Littorai produced a series of incredible Pinot Noir wines from this property as well. Brown began crafting a Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir in 2002. Since 2010, the entire vineyard has been the estate monopole for Rivers-Marie Wines with declassified lots going into the Rivers-Marie Sonoma Coast wines.



2017 Rivers-Marie Summa Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 180 cases, \$80. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Provocative aromas of purple grape, boysenberry, and plum. Amazing fruit concentration in a full-bodied style offering an array of black fruit and intriguing spice flavors that fan out on the palate with vigor. Similar to a Pinot Noir grape reduction sauce but infused with good natural acidity and not a compote. Great harmony with a balancing grip of tannin, and a very long and extremely intense finish. An old vine treasure that has a special aura that defies proper description. Reviewed May 2019. 96*

2018 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 325 cases, \$60. This “Baby Summa” comes from 20-year-old vines. the wine relies more on fruit impact and less on complexity than the Old Vines Summa. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Highly expressive nose, offering scents of dark pie cherries, black raspberries, plum and a hint of vanilla and toast. Mid-weight in concentration, offering a charge of black cherry fruit that saturates the palate and holds up in generosity through an extended finish. Gracious tannins make for easy approachability. Reviewed May 2020. 93*

2018 Rivers-Marie Summa Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 210 cases, \$80. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The enticing nose is a wonderland of aromas that include cherry, spice, forest floor, and pine needle. The dreamy texture makes an impression immediately. Very enjoyable upon opening in a light- to mid-weight style featuring a core of well-spiced redder fruits. A stellar wine with engaging freshness and gossamer tannins, finishing unusually long. There is something special about this wine that is hard to put into words. The wine is more about complexity and breeding than brute sap. This beauty has the balance to age for many years and will surely bring many “oohs and ahas” down the line. Still magnificent when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 95*

2019 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$60. *Medium garnet color in the glass. The nose is initially heavily imbued with oak-driven toast and mocha java aromas. On the palate, the oak-dusted dark fruits are invigorated with good natural acidity and supported by gentle tannins. There is a coffee and tobacco flavor that supersedes the fruit. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, some of the oak on the nose and palate had shed and the wine was considerably more charming. The finish was particularly long. Very young when tasted, this wine should achieve better oak integration with a year or two in the cellar. 92*

2019 Rivers-Marie Summa Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$85. *Medium garnet color in the glass. The nose offers pleasing array of darker berry and stone fruit aromas with noticeable oak rising up. Noticeably complex and suave on the palate in a mid-weight style, featuring flavors of nicely ripened red cherry, raspberry and pomegranate. Very sleek in mouthfeel and quite giving, with very fine tannins and good acidity. There is a touch of oak but it is not as prominent as in the Young Vines bottling. This wine is like an elderly man dressed in a suit in that it demands respect and exudes ages of experience. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine has largely shed its oak cloak and became very enticing. 94*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/120/.

Tilton Hill Vineyard

Owners: Joe Anderson, Mary Dewane and Michael Sullivan (Benovia Winery)

Acres: 12, all Pinot Noir

Year planted: 2009

Location: Three ridges inland from the Pacific coastline near the town of Freestone at the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast border.

Aspect: Perched on a ridge top among a coastal forest.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 777, faux 828 and 943, and Calera.

Soils: 100% Goldridge sand loam.

Vines: Planted on low-vigor rootstock 420A.

Farming: The site pushes the boundaries of cool-climate viticulture, with temperatures rarely reaching 75°F. Sustainable and organic winegrowing.

Winery clients: None, a monopole.

Comments: First vintage from Benovia Winery was 2012.



2016 Benovia Tilton Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$60. *Very dark garnet color in the glass. 14.2% alc., Magnum. Dark garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with scents of blackberry, cassis, spice and a touch of toasty oak. A flood of purple and black berry fruits meet the palate with a generous attack and expansive length, ending with a remarkably long finish. A touch of spice and anise flavor add interest. Very sleek and comforting in texture with a compliment of oak in the background. A Darth Vader wine exhibiting the dark side of Pinot Noir. Still magnificent the following day from a previously opened bottle. The wine has enough balancing tannins to last another ten years. 94*

2018 Benovia Tilton Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Very inviting aromas of boysenberry pie, forest floor and tobacco. Mid-weight plus in richness and creamy in texture, with an arrow of blue and purple berry and pomegranate flavors. This is a wine of gentle richness with enough acidity to lift and freshen the fruit load. Very gentle tannins and excellent balance make for easy drinking now. The finish is ridiculously long. 94*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/1475/.

Walala Vineyard

Owner: Bill Price (Price Family Vineyards) since 2015.

Acres: 25, all Pinot Noir.

Year planted: 2001 by Premier Pacific.

Location: Perched atop a ridge near Annapolis just two miles from the Pacific coastline.

Aspect: In a 20,000-acre forest of pine and redwood at 1200 feet elevation above the fog line.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 113, 115, 777, and faux 828.

Soils: Hugo very gravelly loam.

Vines: Rootstocks are 3309, 3309C, and Riparia Gloire.

Farming: The extreme climate requires precision viticulture directed by Atlas Vineyard Management.

Winery clients: Sojourn Cellars, Tamber Bey, Three Sticks Wines, and Whetstone Wine Cellars (other winery clients in the past).

Comment: This vineyard is at the extreme western edge of Pinot Noir wine growing. long hang time is usual due to the vineyard's close proximity to the coast, but the elevation gives the vines ample sunlight to ripen the grapes.



2016 Three Sticks Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.67% alc., 485 cases, \$70. Clones faux 828, 777 and 115. 25% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in 61% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but agreeable aromas of black fruits, floral bouquet and toast. Initially this wine was very tight and closed, becoming considerably more approachable and livelier after opened several hours and spectacular the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Enviably harmonious in a mid-weight plus style, featuring hedonistic black current and black grape flavors that push but do not exceed ripeness. Despite the rich sap, the wine retains a vibrant and welcoming character. The texture is soothing, the oak is honorably integrated and the preposterous finish goes on and on. Reviewed February 2019. 95*

2018 Sojourn Cellars Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$69. Clones 113 (core of wine), 115 and faux 828. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Beguiling scents of black cherry, spice and toasty oak. A real mouthful of delicious fruit greets the palate, including flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, anise and spice. Suave in texture, with hidden tannins and impeccable balance. Exceptional fruit presence without pronounced body. Wow! 94*

2019 Sojourn Cellars Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 450 cases, \$69. Clones 113 (core of wine), 115 and faux 828 (fermented whole cluster). Native yeast fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of black cherry, savory spices and toasty oak. Rich, ripe and darkly fruited in a mid-weight plus style, served up*

on a lithe, polished frame with restrained tannins. The wine finishes with an effusive drive of spiced black cherry. A young wine that will improve in the cellar. **93**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/1717/.

Wayfarer Vineyard

Owners: Jason and daughter Cleo Pahlmeyer.

Acres: 30 total, 22 acres of Pinot Noir.

Years planted: 2000-2002.

Location: Two ridges and five miles inland from the Pacific Ocean in the Fort Ross-Seaview AVA.

Aspect: On a rolling ridge top at 1,100 feet elevation. Vine rows are laid out east to west on both east-facing and west-facing slopes.

Pinot Noir clones: Pommard 4 and 5, Mt. Eden, Swan, Bacigalupi Old Wente, and Dijon 115, 667, 777 and faux 828.

Soils: 100% Goldridge sandy loam.

Vines: Spacing is 6' x 3' laid out roughly in 30 one-acre blocks with planted clones matched to sun aspect, elevation and slope. Low-vigor rootstocks.

Farming: Double Guyot pruned and meticulously managed for optimal canopy cover. Average yields limited to just 3 lbs per vine.

Winery clients: None, a monopole.

Comments: Four Chardonnay clones are planted and a Wayfarer Vineyard Chardonnay is produced annually.



2014 Wayfarer Wayfarer Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., Magnum. *Very pleasant aromas of darkest cherry, cassis, barnyard and a hint of volatile acidity. Mid-weight plus in sappiness with an array of well-ripened, sweet fruit flavors including black plum, blackberry and raisin. A husky Pinot Noir loaded with luscious fruit but lacking in nuance.* **91**

2018 Wayfarer Wayfarer Estate Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir The winery's flagship bottling composed of all 12 clones in the vineyard. Mostly de-stemmed, aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. This wine takes a few hours to reveal itself and then fills the mouth with overreaching flavors of cherry and spice, revealing considerable staying power on the grand finish. A touch of earthiness grounds the wine. The tannins are modest, the texture is silken and the overall harmony is impressive. Really superb when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. A veritable winegasm.* **96**

2019 Wayfarer Wayfarer Estate Vineyard WF2 Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 600 cases, \$45. The value bottling from Wayfarer. Inaugural vintage. Aged 10 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. I drank a glass at Willi's Seafood Restaurant in Healdsburg in mid-July (\$18) and was impressed. Welcoming aromas of boysenberry and spice followed by mid-weight flavors that echoed the nose. A refreshing acid spine and suede tannins add up to immediate drinkability. A high-quality, everyday Pinot Noir.* **92**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/248/.

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards

Part I: North Coast - Petaluma Gap

“I think most people underestimate just how true the ‘wine is made in the vineyard’ statement really is. I think most folks think that a winemaker can take fruit and make it into whatever they want. But the best wines in the world require the least amount of actual winemaking.”

Noah Rowles, winegrower



Gap's Crown Vineyard

Owner: Originally owned by Premier Pacific, but sold to Bill Price (Price Family Vineyards) in 2013. The vineyard is an Estate property of Three Sticks Wines, also owned by Bill Price. A section of about 37 acres is leased long-term to Kosta Browne, a winery owned by Duckhorn Wine Co.

Acres: 106 acres of Pinot Noir and 32 acres of Chardonnay (approximately).

Years planted: Four planting phases from 1999 to 2005.

Location: On the western hillside of Sonoma Mountain in the town of Penngrrove, east of Rohnert Park. The vineyard is the northeast corner of the Petaluma Gap AVA.

Aspect: A southwest-facing slope at 320-820 feet elevation exposing it to maritime elements. Most of the vines lie above the fog line.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 114, 115, 667, 777, and faux 828, and a Rochioli selection and Swan selection.

Soils: Predominantly well-draining, low-vigor, iron-rich, brown clay loam with significant volcanic rock.

Vines: Two-thirds are planted at a density of 2,264 vines per acre and a third are planted at a density of 1,361 vines per acre. VSP trellising. Rootstocks are 110R, 101-14, 3309, 1616, RG and 420A.

Farming: Managed by Atlas Vineyard Management.

Winery clients: Through the years there have been numerous client wineries with most grapes going into vineyard-designated bottlings. Wineries that have sourced Pinot Noir include Black Kite, Bruliam, Chateau St. Jean, Fulcrum, Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Kosta-Browne, Marine Layer, Patz & Hall, Ram's Gate, Sojourn Cellars, Three Sticks Wines and Typicité. Bottlings after the 2016 vintage may show either "Petaluma Gap" or "Sonoma Coast" AVA on the labels



2013 Bruliam Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir *Moderate garnet color in the glass. A noticeable aged but delightful wine offering aromas of black cherry and worn leather, and flavors of dark cherry, pomegranate, brewed black tea, and truffle. Suave in the mouth, with some fading of fruit, but still pushing out enough fruit for a satisfying finish. 92*

2016 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$68. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Enviably aromatic goodness with scents of black cherry, straw bale, cardamom spice, underbrush and garlic powder. Sensational in every way with a mid-weight charge of delicious black cherry, dark raspberry, pomegranate and spice flavors backed by gentle, supportive tannins. Impeccable balance with a memorable, succulent black cherry finish. Still exceptional when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. I have had this wine on several occasions and each time it was stellar. 96*

2016 Trombetta Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$65. Clones 777, faux 828, and 115. Harvest Brix 25.0°. Native yeast fermentation, extended cold soak and maceration, native malolactic fermentation in barrels, aged 9 months in 35% new French oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of tilled soil, blackberry, blueberry, and smoky oak. Very richly fruited and lush on the palate with a viscous mouthfeel. Dark fruits are featured with matched tannins and uplifting acidity. 92*

2017 Furthermore Gap's Crown Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 240 cases. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Gloriously aromatic, with scents of black stone fruits, dark berries, rose petal and warm brioche. A deluge of black cherry and black raspberry fruits greet the palate but there is enough supportive acidity (even a citric note) to lift the fruit to brightness. Of special note is the highly persistent, fruit-filled finish. 93*

2017 Gary Farrell Gap's Crown Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$80 *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Fresh aromas of an array of dark red and purple berries. Impressive attack of boysenberry fruit with good mid-palate length and finish. Gentle richness, with merged tannins and assertive acidity. 92*

2018 Bruliam Gap's Crown Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$65. Harvest Brix 23.8°. Grapes were 100% de-stemmed. 5-day cold soak, inoculated with proprietary yeast for primary fermentation. Aged 10 months in 30% new French oak barrels and another 18 months in bottle prior to February 2021 release. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Ooh la la aromas of dark red cherry, raspberry and spice. Mid-weight flavors replicate the aromas in a beautifully composed wine with perfect balance between fruit, tannin and acidity. The impeccable balance predicts age ability.* **94**

2018 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 214 cases, \$70. Clones 667 and faux 828. Aged 11 months in 40% new French oak bottles. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A relatively ripe, boisterous, full-bodied wine that makes a big impression. The aromas and flavors of dark berry fruits are quite luscious but the sappy fruit is not summatrié. The rich fruit cloaks the supportive tannins so the mouthfeel is sleek and velvety. A typical Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir.* Reviewed May, 2020. **93**

2018 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$60. Clones 115, 667 and faux 828. Native yeast fermentation. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. I liked this aromatic nose offering scents of black cherry, blackberry, allspice, bay leaf and a touch of oak. Juicy, with uplifting, acid-driven freshness in a mid-weight style with flavors of purple and black berries. A shadow of oak adds to the pleasure, the felty tannins make for easy drinking, and the spirited finish has good length. **93**

2019 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., 850 cases, \$69. Clones 115, 667 and faux 828. 10% whole cluster (portion of 667). Native yeast fermentation. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Easygoing aromas of blueberry-pomegranate, potpourri and mulch. A big boy, full-bodied wine with richly flavored blue and black fruits. Sleek in the mouth with modest, balancing tannins. The finish is modest in length but pleasing. Admirable balance at this high ABV.* **92**

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/468/.

Terra De Promissio Vineyard

Owners: Charles and Diana Karren

Acres: 50, all Pinot Noir.

Years planted: 2002: 32 acres of Dijon 115 and 777. 2012: 18 acres of Dijon 943, 97 (Swan), and a Calera selection.

Location: A short distance east of Highway 116 in the Petaluma Gap AVA.

Aspect: Southwest exposure, 25%-40% slope, 188 feet elevation. The vineyard is always under the fog, not above it like with the vineyards on the West Sonoma Coast.

Pinot Noir clones: Dijon 115, 777, 943, and Swan and Calera selections.

Soils: Sandy loam and adobe clay.

Vines: 8' x 4' spacing, cane pruned VSP trellising.

Farming: Sustainably farmed by the Karrens (Donna makes most of the farming decisions). Each row and block is custom-farmed to the winemaker's instructions.

Winery clients: Partner wineries include Castello Di Amorosa, Domaine Della, Dutcher Crossing, Gary Farrell Winery & Vineyards, Lynmar, MacRostie, Metzker Family Estates, Senses, Siduri, SPELL, The Calling, and Williams Selyem. Most clients vineyard designate their Pinot Noir. The Karren's own label is Land of Promise. The Land of Promise includes four different Terra de Promissio Pinot Noirs. The Karrens taste and approve all the wines made by client wineries before the wines can be labeled with the Terra de Promissio Vineyard designation, a total of 14 wines annually.

Comments: The vineyard name, "Terra de Promissio," translates to "Land of Promise", a name trademarked in 2007. The combination of soil, southwest sun exposure, elevation, and vine density, combined with the fog and wind from the Petaluma Gap, allow the grapes to mature slowly, yielding extended hang time, and optimum ripeness. These ideal conditions result in intense flavors, ample tannin structure, and nearly perfect natural acidity. Swan clone 97 was submitted to the FPS by Dehlinger Vineyard in the Russian River Valley for certification and was registered in 2001. Typically, clone 97 produces bright and rich Pinot Noir, lighter in color than many other clones, with intense aromatics and an elegant,

earthy character. Bottlings from this vineyard may have “Petaluma Gap” or “Sonoma Coast” AVA designation on the label beginning with the 2016 vintage but the Karrens prefer “Sonoma Coast” for consistency reasons. The Karrens do not require winery clients to use the name Terra de Promissio and over the years some have used other names yet contained 100% Terra de Promissio fruit.



2016 Land of Promise Terra de Promissio Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$75 *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Intoxicating aromas of spiced black cherry, ripe strawberry, cardamom spice and toasty oak. Plenty of nuance on the palate with mid-weight plus flavors of black cherry, dark raspberry, blackberry, spice, and truffle. The rich fruit sap that saturates the mid-palate and elevates the finish in length, veers to the very ripe side. There is noticeable barrel infusion which may appeal depending on one's preference. 93*

2017 Gary Farrell Terra de Promissio Vineyard Swan Clone 97 Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 49 cases, \$75. 65% of grapes de-stemmed (35% whole cluster). 4 to 7 day cold soak, 7 to 10 day extended maceration, and aged on the lees for 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Nothing but good things to say about this gorgeous wine. A nose you could drink features aromas of bourbon-infused cherry, ripe strawberry and blackberry. Delectable flavors of darkest cherry, black raspberry and blackberry with a shadow of oak spice. Well-matched fine-grain tannins and bright acidity (pH 3.43, TA 7.1 gm/L) that brightens the drinking experience and propels the very long, lip-smacking finish. Superb harmony. Flat-out great and like the energizer bunny, kept going and going and going in the glass when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 97*

2018 Montagne Russe Terra de Promissio Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 95 cases, \$65. Calera clone. Aged on the lees for 10 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *Pleasant aromas of black cherry, pomegranate, cassis and oak-driven spice and caramel. Full-bodied in style, with an array of rich, well-ripened darker berry fruits. A big boy Pinot Noir, yet enough acidity to retain some brightness and not tiring to drink. The mouthfeel is luscious and the tannins are well integrated. There is the slightest bit of alcoholic heat on the finish. 90*

2018 Senses Terra de Promissio Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$56 The winemaker is Thomas Rivers Brown. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Enticing aromas of boysenberry, blackberry, spice and purple flower. A bit husky and rugged in a mid-weight plus style, with flavors of boysenberry, blackberry and raisin with hints of smoke and spice. There is some astringency on the somewhat long finish. A big gulp of very ripe fruit with a creamy mouthfeel, lacking some nuance. 91*

2019 SPELL Terra de Promissio Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$60 *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Boysenberry aroma is framed by smoky oak. Mid-weight plus in style, with smoke-infused fruit flavors of purple berry and black cherry. The tannins are modestly proportioned and the finish long and fruity.*

When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, the smoky ash note persisted but the fruit core was exuberant and the wine was livelier. 90

2019 Williams Selyem Terra de Promissio Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$65. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nuanced nose exhibiting aromas of dark strawberry, dark red cherry, cardamom spice and a hint of smoke. A noticeable oak overlay conceals the core of black cherry and candy apple flavors initially. When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, the wine was much more appealing, with delicious flavors of darker cherry, spice and hazelnut with welcome length on the finish. The oak imprint had largely disappeared. Like many 2019s tasted for this report, the wines are very young and often show the barrel treatment when initially opened. 93*

More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/219/.

Exceptionally High-Scoring Wines in This Issue

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2016 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

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2015 Littorai Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

2017 Gary Farrell Terra de Promissio Vineyard Swan Clone 97 Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir

2018 Maggy Hawk Jolie Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

2018 Williams Selyem Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

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2014 Ceritas Old Shop Block Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2015 Drew Morning Dew Ranch Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

2016 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2016 Soliste Renaissance Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2016 Wayfarer Wayfarer Estate Vineyard Fort-Ross Seaview Pinot Noir

2017 Coastlands Diane Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2017 RAEN Home Field Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir

2017 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2018 Drew Wendling Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

2018 Failla Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

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2013 Soliste Sonatera Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2016 Brooks Note Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir

2016 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2016 Three Sticks Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2016 WesMar Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2017 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 Dutton-Goldfield McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 Hirsch Vineyards Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 Joseph Phelps Vineyards Pastoral Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2019 Rivers-Marie Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2019 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

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2012 COBB Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2012 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2014 SPELL Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir
2016 Benovia Tilton Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2016 Soliste Sonatera Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2017 Coastlands Old Fir Block Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2017 Littorai One Acre Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir
2017 Rivers-Marie Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 Benovia Tilton Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 Bruliam Gap's Crown Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir
2018 Hirsch Vineyards East Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 MacRostie Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 RAEN Sea Field Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir
2018 Sojourn Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2019 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2018 Williams Selyem Morning Dew Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

Wine Briefings

Sta. Rita Hills Wine Alliance Wine & Fire Weekend Sta. Rita Hills is celebrating its 20th anniversary of approval of its AVA status with a full weekend of special activities August 12-15. Tickets are available for individual events or as a full weekend package. The weekend package includes all three seminars, a complimentary weekend tasting passport, and the premier La Paulée Dinner honoring Sta. Rita Hills pioneers. There are also limited tickets to the Grand Tasting at La Purisma Mission on August 14. Shuttles are available from three Lompoc hotels for some events. Visit www.eventbrite.com for tickets.

Willamette Valley Gains Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) Status Harry Peterson-Nedry of RR Wines and Ridgecrest Vineyards and the Willamette Valley wineries Association fought for this recognition. This milestone recognizes the quality of Willamette Valley wine and protects the Willamette Valley name from misuse and fraudulent labeling in the European Union and many markets around the world. Among US wine regions, only Napa Valley and now the Willamette Valley bear this distinction.

Celebration of Pigs & Pinot Tickets & Packages Tickets for Charlie Palmer's annual event went on sale July 14 and will probably sell out by the time you read this but you can inquire. Chef Charlie Palmer and a team of renowned culinary and wine authorities will host the event on September 10 at Hotel Healdsburg and Dry Creek Kitchen. The event is centered around a multi-course dinner hosted by Chef Palmer and showcasing some of Sonoma County's greatest Pinot Noir wines and perfect pork pairings. Visit www.eventbrite.com for tickets to the Celebration Package and or Celebration Dinner.

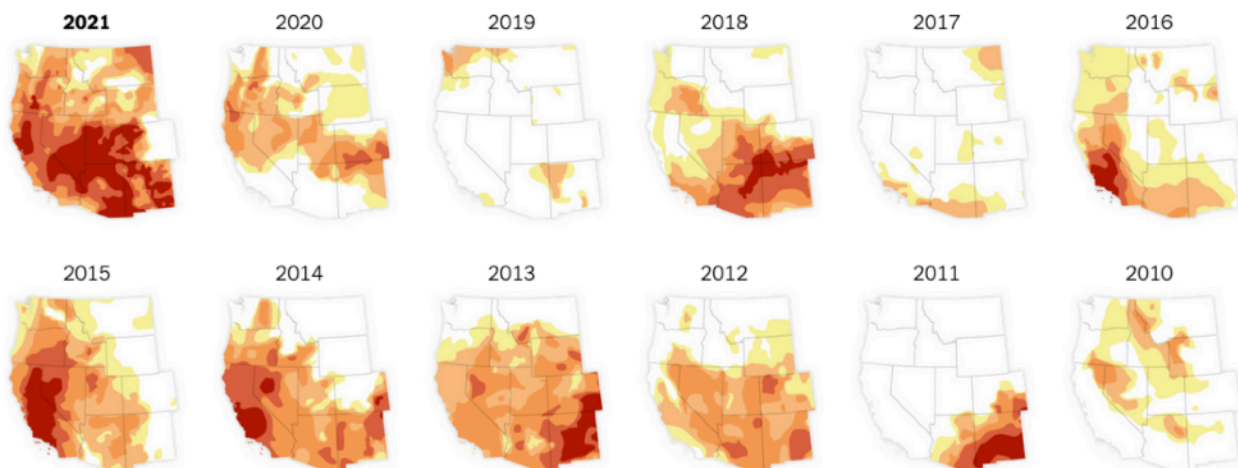
Sad Outcome of Smoke Taint in 2020 Industry sources estimate 165,000-325,000 tons of California wine grapes, valued at \$601 million, went unharvested in 2020 due to actual or perceived concerns of quality loss due to wildfire smoke events. As of April 4, 2021, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency reported paying \$187,920,862 in crop insurance claims to growers due to wildfire and smoke-related losses.

Shakeup at Linfield University's Evenstad Center for Wine Education Renowned research climatologist Gregory V. Jones has resigned as the director of Linfield University's wine studies program to explore a few options in the U.S. and abroad. Also resigning was Chelsea Janzen, the program's office coordinator, and Jeffrey Peterson an associate professor who teaches numerous classes in Linfield's wine studies program. The resignations occur at a time in which Linfield University's administration faced charges of antisemitism and mishandling sexual harassment cases. A vocal critic of the Linfield administration, tenured professor Daniel Pollack Petzner, resign from the University's board of trustees. The story was reported by Michael Alberty in **The Oregonian** newspaper on July 6, 2021.

Drought Conditions in the West

Early June Drought Conditions in the West

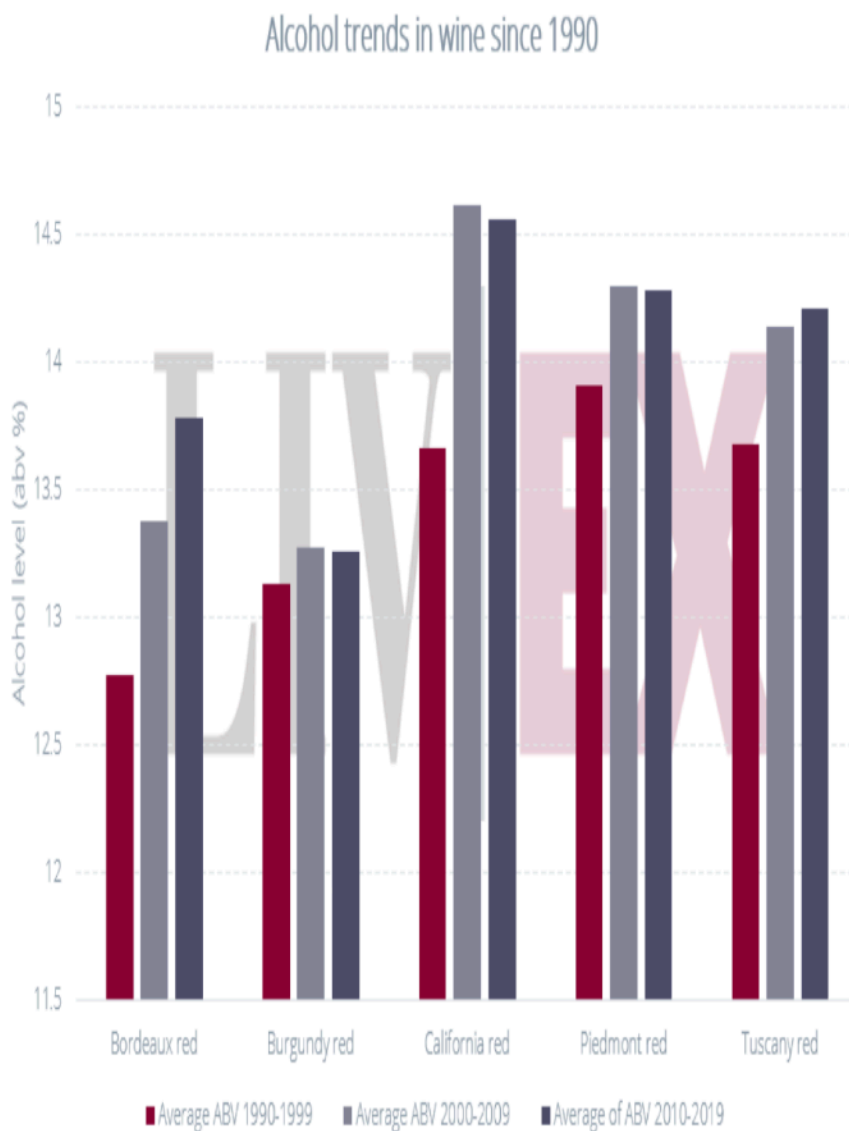
EXCEPTIONAL DROUGHT EXTREME SEVERE MODERATE ABNORMALLY DRY



Source: U.S. Drought Monitor via New York Times

Buying Burgundy? Forget about it Burgundy prices are through the roof and only attract crazy-rich billionaires these days. Top-shelf wines like DRC La Tache are only a memory for most of us and the coming generations will probably never experience that wine or any of the best Grand Cru Burgundy wines. Want a bottle of Leroy Musigny? You will need to fork over \$33,067 according to Wine-Searcher. Even village-level wines from good producers are priced beyond the reach of most pinotphiles. It is high time to fall in love with California and Oregon Pinot Noir!

Red Wine Alcohol Levels Have Increased Over the Last 30 Years According to a study of 35,000 red wines produced between 1990 and 2019 from five major growing regions conducted by the London International Vintner’s Exchange (Liv-ex), the average ABV has increased significantly for all regions except Burgundy. The reasons are unclear but probably global warming and stylistic preferences play a significant role.



In the October 6, 2020 issue of the *PinotFile*, I wrote about this issue in an article titled, “An Investigation of Alcohol Levels of California and Oregon Pinot Noir since 2004.” I surveyed ABV levels of California Pinot Noirs I had reviewed for a 14-year period from 2004 to 2018 and found the average ABV had decreased by about 1.0% (14.40% in 2004 to 13.73% in 2018). In a survey of Oregon Pinot Noirs I had reviewed from 2004 to 2017, the average ABV showed no change other than a spike in the very warm 2006 and 2009 vintages. The fly in the soup for California is that a significant number of wineries use alcohol reduction but never reveal this to the consumer. Could the decrease in average ABV over the period studied be due in part to increased use of alcohol reduction by wineries? Learn more at www.princeofpinot.com/article/2265/.

Quick Reviews of Recently Tasted Pinot Noir I have not found time to write extensively about these wines in any special issue feature, but I would like to offer a brief critique.

2017 B Side North Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$17. Vinted and bottled by Don Sebastiani & Sons, Napa, CA. Aromas of oak and seabed. Earthy black cherry fruit on the palate with a medicinal note and a shadow of oak. Good cut on the short finish. With Pinot Noir, you get what you pay for. **87**

2018 Alma Fria Pleural Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 415 cases, \$40. 10% whole cluster. Aged 12 months in 10% new French oak. Typical Sonoma Coast nose featuring dark strawberry, spice and autumn forest. Full-bodied, with a flood of purple and black fruits attacking the palate infused with muscular tannins. Monotone and undistinguished. **88**

2018 Alma Fria Döna Margerita Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 60 cases, \$70. Vineyard planted in 2002 in Freestone. 15% whole cluster. Aged in 25% new French oak. Aromas of boysenberry, prickly pear, rose petal and oak vanillin. Mid-weight flavors of boysenberry, blueberry-pomegranate with respectable balance and a moderately long finish. **91**

2018 Alma Fria Holtermann Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., 100 cases, \$70. Vineyard planted in Annapolis in 2002 at 700-800 feet elevation. 15% whole cluster. Aged in 30% new French oak. Dark garnet. Nice perfume of black cherry, wine cave and dark rose petal. A discreet load of purple and black berry fruits with a savory herbal thread. Modest tannins, admirable balance and some length on the finish. Some enjoyable personality. **92**

2018 Anthill Farms Campbell Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$44. Vineyard is near Annapolis on the fog line at 750 feet. Farmed by Steve Campbell. Pleasant aromas of underbrush, floral goodness, cherry, strawberry and cocoa. Infused with blueberry and dark red cherry fruit with a hint of oak-driven cocoa and vanilla. Silky, with gentle tannins and a slightly tart cherry finish. **92**

2018 Drew Estate Field Selection Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$60. Dark garnet. Aromas of black cherry, spice, redwood timber and barnyard. Flush with earthy black cherry and raspberry fruit backed by modest tannins. Impeccable harmony, with a smooth and refreshing finish. Better the following day when I finished the bottle. Exceptional. **95**

2018 Nielson by Byron Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$19, screw cap. Aromas of red cherry, strawberry, spice and oak-driven toast and espresso. Flavors echo the aromas in a mid-weight style with satisfying fruit on the mid-palate and finish with soft tannins, but way too much oak presence for me. **88**

2018 Marshall Davis Estate Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 200 cases, \$38. Dijon 777, 114, Pommard and Mariafeld clones. Aged 14 months in 25% new French oak. Dijon 114, 777 and Pommard clones. 60% whole cluster. Moderately light garnet color. Aromas of black cherry, spice and dark rose petal with similar flavors adding blueberry. Picks up interest and appeal over time in the glass, with solid harmony and a bright cherry-driven finish. Excellent value. **90**

2018 Marshall Davis Estate Vineyard Cask Series Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir. 13.8% alc., 175 cases, \$45. Clones 114, 777 and Pommard. 60% whole cluster. Aged in a single 15HL French oak tank. Moderately light garnet color. Seductive aromas of cherry, baking spice, tilled earth and rose petal. Very interesting, with mid-weight flavors of black cherry boysenberry and hints of burnt tobacco, exotic spice, sandalwood and savory herbs that carry over to a highly aromatic finish. Even better when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. A terrific wine for whole cluster fans. **93**

2018 McElroy Vines & Roses Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. 14.2% alc., 974 cases, \$28. Native yeast fermentation, aged in 35% new French oak. Light ruby red color. Enticing aromas of Bing cherry, baking spice and cola. Lighter in style but flavorful, with a core of red cherry and berry fruits annotated with spice. Sleek, with gentle tannins. A solid, every day wine that exceeds expectations at this price. **90**

2018 Rhys Mt. Pajaro Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$79. Still a very young wine with moderately vigorous tannins. Mid-weight plus purple and black fruits with an earthy character. Very suave in mouth with soaring aromas of dark cherry and berry when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. **94**

2018 Texture Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$60. Winemaker Erich Bradley of Sojourn Cellars. *Plenty of dark red and black cherry fruit to satisfy with some spice and earthy flora adjuncts. A cherry jubilee with an impressive entry and even more impressive long finish. An impressive appellation blend. 93*

2019 Morgan Twelve Clones Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$35. *Nicely perfumed and tastefully appointed with aromas and flavors of spiced black cherry, strawberry and raspberry. Silky in the mouth in an elegant style. Very giving and both a superb value and excellent daily drinker. 92*