



# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 12, Issue 34 December 30, 2022

*Final  
Issue*

## A Commonplace Bucket of Pinot Noir: Quotes, Ephemera, and Thoughts

*“Commonplace books are rarely compiled by commonplace people.”*

M.F.K. Fisher

Dating back to the 16th century, extracts saved for future reference were known as “commonplaces.” As pointed out by Henry Hitchings in the *Wall Street Journal*, November 14-15, 2020, writers such as George Eliot, Robert Burns, and Thomas Jefferson have long hoarded oddments.

For the last 45 years of my life, I have been obsessed with Pinot Noir. I began early on to jot down and save comments, quotes, historical facts, and memorabilia related to that one grape and varietal. A good portion of this ephemera has been scattered throughout the 576 issues of the *PinotFile* dating to April 22, 2001. This issue brings all the bits and pieces together in one place, albeit not in a neatly ordered fashion. Any entries that do not have attribution either are lacking (my apologies) or were written by myself.



If you drink no Noir....you Pinot Noir.

Great Pinot Noir is like sex in a bottle.

Pinot Noir has more to say than other wines.

There is an old French tale of the Burgundian taking lunch with his faithful dog at his side. When the sommelier asks for the old gentlemen's vinous preference, he says, "A glass of Chambertin for myself, and a little Beaune for my dog."....anonymous

Champagne makes you think of silly things, Bordeaux makes you talk of them, and Burgundy makes you do them."....anonymous

Oregon Pinot Noir arrived to stay in 1994. This was a perfect growing year with uniform ripening and a new standard for excellence emerged.

California and Oregon have made great strides with Pinot Noir in the last decade, and at least several Pinot Noirs are in such demand that collectors will go to great lengths to acquire these "cult" Pinot Noirs (2001).

The most expensive part of having children is all the Pinot Noir you have to drink.

There is more to life than Pinot Noir, but not much more.

Seduction is Pinot Noir's calling card.

What costs hard work and hard money to play in the most complicated, arcane anachronistic, contradictory, illogical, and medieval place in winedom? No one who calls himself a wine lover can ignore it. The risk is too great. There is too much to be missed and life is too short to chance it. Answer: Burgundy. Burgundy can make you glad just to be alive. No wine is better at interrupting a conversation, making the hair stand up on the back of your neck, or stroking your senses than great Burgundy.. The great experiences with Burgundy happen to all of us, but not often enough. The more bad ones you have, the more you treasure the ones that leave you speechless....*C.S Lewis, Surprised by Joy.*

A sip of Pinot Noir is worth a thousand words.

Pinot Noir is a form of madness for both producers and drinkers alike. Both persist because a great Pinot Noir brings you as close to God as any wine can....Matt Kramer

Everyone knows that salmon and Pinot Noir are great partners. How about "dishwasher salmon?" Poaching salmon in the dishwasher is a virtually foolproof way to shock your friends, prepare succulent salmon, and do the dishes, all at the same time. The recipe is in the book, *The Surreal Gourmet Entertains*. Salmon is very forgiving so although temperature and cycle durations vary with each machine, a little more or less washing doesn't greatly affect the results. To heighten the drama - and prove that you have nothing up your sleeve - let your dinner guests crowd around the dishwasher when you load the fish. Then, when the cycle is complete, invite them back to witness the unloading....Bob Blumer One can also cook salmon on a car engine while traveling to a location for a picnic, but that is another story.

Pinot Noir is the Tiffany of the wine world.

PINOT: Price is no object.

Pinot Noir isn't like Cabernet or Chardonnay. If you buy a case of one of these varietals, it will taste pretty much the same at 1 week, 3 weeks, and 6 months later. Pinot Noir will never render its charms in a similar regular fashion. I have had great Pinots and then opened another bottle of the same wine from the same case 2 weeks later, and it just wasn't the same. Pinot Noir is a fickle wine that won't offer all of its charms every time.

Pinot Noir: Vitamin P.

Great Pinot Noir reaches for your heart.

Drinking Pinot Noir is like finding a wife: you have to spend some time to find a queen. You might have to drink ten Pinots to find one that is worthy. Whether courting Pinot or a future wife, it will cost you some serious cash. However, when you find one that is worthy, it turns you on like nothing else and makes the cost seem paltry and insignificant.

Burgundies tend to climb the point scale ladder more consistently as they age and ripen, more so than any other wine.

The recommended serving temperature for Pinot Noir is between 58 and 63 degrees. The cooler temperature helps to emphasize the fruit and understate the alcohol.

The English wine writer Jancis Robinson calls Pinot Noir "that minx of a grape." Well-known Australian wine writer James Halliday has accused Pinot Noir of being "a temperamental and fickle mistress. Wine writer Bob Thompson once said of Pinot Noir, "Even where it prospers, it needs to be coaxed, wheedled, flattered, cajoled cursed, and prayed over almost ounce by ounce through a series of crises that start at the fermenters and last beyond bottling." Wine writer Frank Prial said, "Even the Burgundians, who have been working with it for centuries, have trouble growing Pinot Noir and more trouble making it into wine."



Pinot Noir clusters

Pinot Noir is the master musician. Where one wine is dissonant with food, Pinot Noir finds harmony. Where another is brash, Pinot Noir is pianissimo. Where the food is robust, Pinot Noir plays multi-forte....R. Del Gran

Claus Joseph Riedel passed away in March 2004 at the age of 79. His 37-ounce Burgundy Grand Cru stem (called the "goldfish bowl") was the first glass in the Sommeliers collection. The collection of 10 different shapes were first released in 1973.

Pinot Noir is easily susceptible to "bottle shock." After bottling, Pinot Noir may be flat, simple, and insipid. 6 months after bottling, the conditions reach a nadir and the wine starts coming back. After 1 year, the wine is about the same as when it was bottled and is getting even better.

You can trace a Pinot Noir's personality to the winemaker.

Pinot Noir is as inviting as silk sheets.

Pinot is a great food wine and factor in the health angle (proven health benefits of red wine, especially Pinot Noir, which has high amounts of antioxidants) you have the perfect beverage.

Pinot is easy to say and much more sophisticated than that populist wine - "Chardonnay". I can just see the ads showing a group of four women at a fancy restaurant dressed to the nines, looking up at the waiter and asking, "Got any good Pinot?"

If you are at a loss as to what wine to pair with a dish you are cooking, choose Pinot Noir. It almost always works. Pinot Noir is the universal default food wine.

Nothing makes the future look so rosy as to contemplate it through a glass of Chambertin....Napoleon Bonaparte

While it takes a good winemaker to make a great Cabernet, it requires a great winemaker to make a good Pinot Noir.

Humans have a powerful ability to store palate memories and often those remembrances have an emotional impact. For example, drinking that silky Russian River Valley Pinot Noir might transport you back to a moment when your mother made cherry jam, perfuming the house.

At their best, Pinot Noirs are the most romantic of wines, with so voluptuous a perfume, so sweet an edge, so powerful a punch that, like falling in love, they make the blood run hot and the soul wax embarrassingly poetic....Joel Fleishman

One of my friends asked me recently, "How often do you have a glass of Pinot Noir?" I replied, "Only six nights a week. Every once in a while you have to drink some water."

Have you tried drinking Pinot Noir out of your lover's navel? You will quickly discover that the one downside of a woman with a beautiful figure is that a flat stomach means a shallow naval that is essentially useless as a receptacle. Most of your prized Pinot Noir will end up on the carpet.

Then there is the spirit of La Tâche - the roses on a stony grave, their scent rising to the clouds like a monk's spirit resurrected from the grave - the wine had that religious power....Joshua Green on the 1999 La Tâche.

Pinot Noir is perfume mixed with power.

Pinot Noir is fickle, capricious, and chameleon-like.

Once you have tasted a great Burgundy you can never go back and may find yourself selling the house, quitting your job, and scouring the planet to touch heaven one more time.

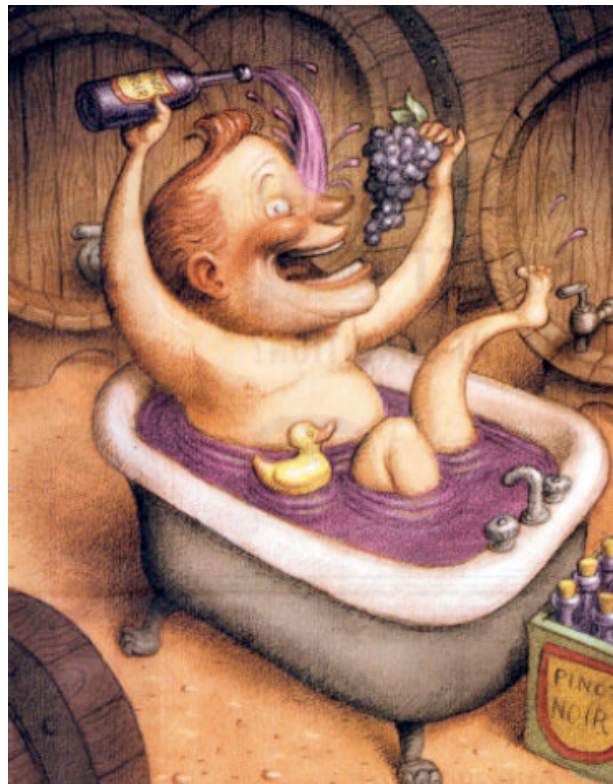
Pinot Noir fermentation: the process by which grapes are turned into dollars.

Cabernet is a Bordello Pinot is a Casino.

Pinot Noir: for those who know these wines, there is no approximation: for those who love them, there is no substitute.

Some believe Pinot Noir is a macho thing. Anyone who makes Pinot Noir just wants to get laid. It's the world's sexiest grape and a manly thing to say you make Pinot.

The *PinotFile* is a working man's (woman's) newsletter. Only wines the author has drunk are featured, and then only ones that pass muster. If it is not in the *PinotFile*, it may not be worthy. The wine reviews are based on drinking individual wines over a few hours with and without food. The evolution of the wine is traced in the glass. The general impressions of the author are given, but no scores. I believe the numerical grading system is faulted by gradations that are way too precise and subjective....Rusty Gaffney 2004



When is the right time to drink Pinot Noir? You can't drink the wine right after it is bottled because of "bottle shock." When you buy the wine you cannot drink it because of "sticker shock" (you need a special occasion to drink such an expensive wine). When the wine is shipped to you, you cannot drink it for at least eight weeks because of "shipping shock." When a special occasion arises, you may not be able to drink it because the wine is in a "dumb phase." When you finally find a time worthy to drink the wine, it may have peaked and is now on the downslope or in its "senility phase." The best advice is to drink the wine 2-3 years after buying it and cellaring it properly and keep your fingers crossed.

Burgundy is great when someone else is buying it....A.J. Liebling

Pinot Noir's soft, seductive textures have the broadest, most complex flavor profile of any wine. A great Pinot Noir has layers and layers of subtle nuances that constantly provoke the taster's awareness and prod him or her to look deeper....Sommy Martin

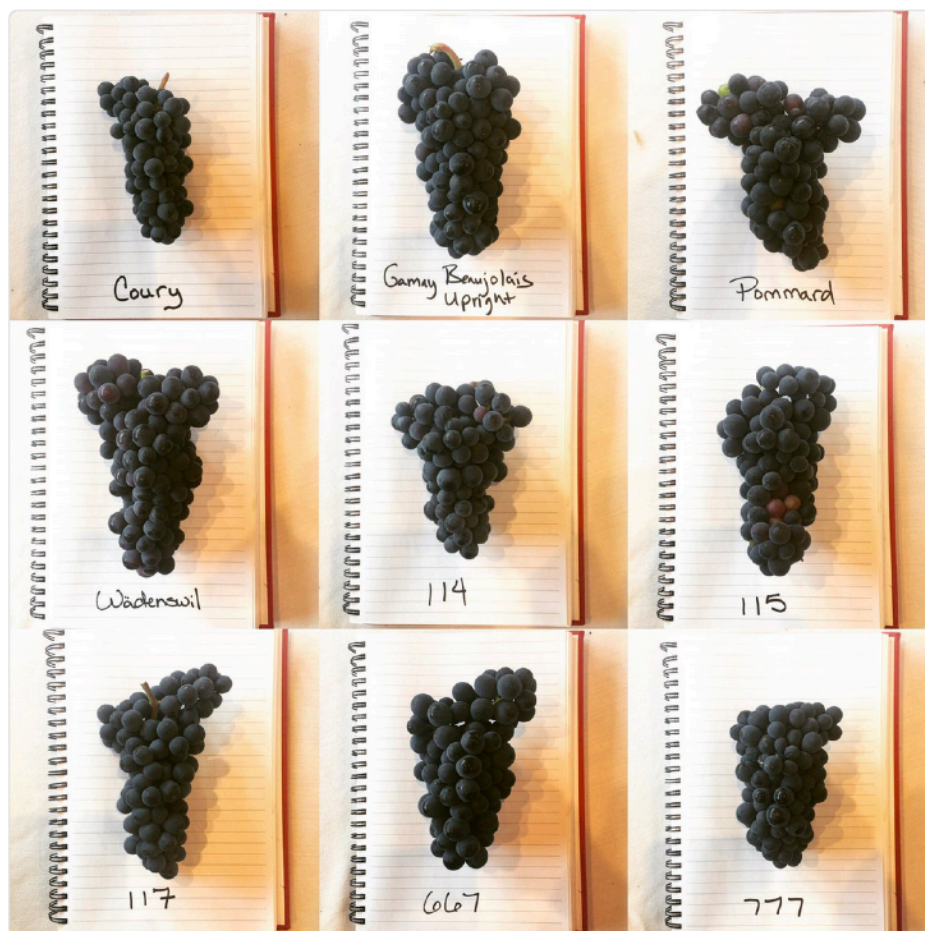
Pinot is the girl you've always wanted but could never have.

When you fall in love with wine, you end up loving Pinot Noir....Gina Gallo

It's "PEE-no-NWAH" in French and "PEE-no-NWAR" in English ("Peanut-Nowhar" in the south).

If I drank over 1,500 wines during the year, my wife would accuse me of having a drinking problem. You do it, call it research, brag about it, and gain respect among your friends. Way to go!....from a reader of the *PinotFile* 2007

It is difficult to pinpoint the origin of Pinot Noir because of its tendency to mutate. Pinot Noir may have originated in the Nile region, where it developed from *vitis vinifera occidentalis*. It was then spread by the Greeks, and taken to France by the Romans. It was dispersed from Burgundy to other European sites beginning sometime in the 19th century. Pinot Noir was imported into California in the 19th century. It is difficult to know exactly when Pinot Noir was brought into the state because it came in under many different names such as "Black Burgundy" and "Petite Pinot." Agoston Haraszthy brought in what he referred to as "Pinot Noir Black" in 1862. In 1882, H.W. Crabb planted what he called "Pinot Noiren." Pinot Noir is now grown in nearly every wine-producing country in Europe, and is cultivated on every continent except Antarctica.



All of us have moments in our lives that test our courage. Taking a Pinot Noir and children into a house with white carpet is one of them. Anyway, the taste of the wine was ok and the price was alright. But how come anything you buy will go on sale next week?....Erma Bombeck

The line between Pinot and sex is blurred.

Pinot Noir is liquid lingerie.

Great Pinot Noir is oral sex.

Great Pinot is a pretense to seduction.

When it's good, Pinot Noir is totally sensual.

The impact of winegrowing and winemaking choices can be greater because Pinot Noir shows the fingerprint of every process, intervention and manipulation, as well as of every neglect, both in the vineyard and in the cellar....wine writer John Winthrop Hager

There is red wine, real (red) wine, and Pinot Noir.

I love Pinot Noir because its expression is so diverse from region to region, vintner to vintner, year to year. It's unlike any varietal in that way. It's a low-yield grape, difficult to grow and even more difficult to bring to its full potential. One has to marvel at and respect those vintners and viticulturists who have a passion for this maddening varietal. They're like artists who strive, against all odds, for greatness, and too often come up short. But when they get it, when all the planets are in alliance, the results are nothing short of levitational mesmeric....author Rex Pickett, 'Sideways'

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

Pinot Noir has a mind of its own.

Pinot Noir: "Enfant terrible."

Pinot Noir is like money - only too much is enough.

There is nothing quite as satisfying as succeeding with Pinot Noir. It is the most responsive, delicate, fickle, fragile grape to work with - and I'm hooked on it."....winemaker Lane Tanner

The flavors of the great red Burgundies are sensuous, often erotic, above rational discourse and beyond the measures of criticism as they flout the conventions in favor of something rooted in emotions and passions too powerful to be taught, too ancient to be meddled with....noted wine writer OZ Clarke

Pinot Noir: only sexual analogies can do it justice.

Pinot Noir is a liquid lullaby.

More than almost any other grape, Pinot thrives when it lives on the edge.... wine writer Lauren MacNeil

People who love Burgundy are far more passionate about wine than are Bordeaux lovers....wine writer Lauren MacNeil

The modern Pinot protocol is 5 parts gentle and 5 parts even more gentle....wine writer Tim Patterson  
Pinot Noir winemakers are playing with the gifts of God.

There is no better reward for the winemaker than to put a great Pinot Noir in the bottle....winemaker Gary Farrell



Interviewing George Levkoff at Pinot Days

Hanzell was the first California winery to use stainless steel tanks and French oak barrels. The winery's first winemaker, Brad Webb, developed inert gas technology, using nitrogen to prevent oxidation.

Pinot Noir: no longer the heartbreak grape. But it does still have a mind of its own....wine writer Tim Patterson

Pinot Noir is easy to covet but hard to own.

Pinot Noir appeals more to the heart than the head.

With Pinot, size does matter, in fact, the smaller the better. Grapes that have smaller clusters and smaller berries make the wines with the highest varietal intensity. The clones with the biggest berries produce the lightest wines....viticulturist Richard Nagaoka

Pinot Noir is the chosen one.

Who Dat say dey don't love Pinot Noir?

In 2008, Eric Asimov wrote in *The New York Times*: I have to confess, I don't drink much California Pinot Noir. The prevailing thick, fruit-and-oak-drenched style, often with a touch of sweetness, does not appeal to me. I find that these wines are clumsy at the table, overwhelming and fatiguing. In short, many of the leading California Pinot Noir today seem to me to be the antithesis of what Pinot Noirs ought to be: light, elegant, graceful and refreshing.



James Laube of the *Wine Spectator* magazine wrote in 2006 a much different view of California Pinot Noir than Eric Asimov: California Pinot Noir has risen from being a wine likely to frustrate to become one of the state's most inspiring varietals. This turnaround has elevated California Pinot Noir to the world wine stage.

Pinot Noir is afternoon sunshine through stained glass.

Pinot Noir is an expensive mistress.

The notion of consistently excellent Pinot Noir is an oxymoron.

Enjoying a bottle of fine red Burgundy is a superb antidote to the angst of life's stresses....Dave Di Simone

Pinot Noir has literally thousands of clones. It is genetically speaking rather weak. That is, it does not strongly hold onto its identity and mutates easily. The French have confirmed about 1,000, while Cabernet Sauvignon has but a dozen. It is clear the variety is as profligate as Hugh Hefner's pajamas....wine writer Ken Robertson

David Darington describes a 1980 Bonneau du Martray Grand Cru Burgundy he shared with a friend at a dinner in San Francisco: This one was much more yin than yang - seductive rather than overpowering, an angel as opposed to an Amazon, but no less gorgeous for being shy. Its ability to bring down Godzilla (i.e. us) was achieved with a flick of the wrist: it took our testosterone-laden worldview and wafted it through the air, depositing us upon a down-filled comforter and reducing us to whimpering babies. I suppose you could say that, in that moment, we were reborn - if not in our male identities, then certainly in our attitude toward one.

Pinot Noir is the source of more tears than country music radio.

Pinot Noir wraps you in silk pajamas.

All Pinot Noir should taste like Pinot Noir and show a sense of place by exhibiting a regional character known as terroir. Great Pinot Noir should taste like Pinot Noir, exhibit terroir, and possess a certain sexiness that is as sensual as it is difficult to describe....winemaker Robert Sinskey

I love to tell a story about a group of wine enthusiasts who were at their monthly wine-tasting meeting. Hunched over their Riedel glasses for a couple of hours sniffing, spitting, and gurgling, they waxed poetically about the subtleties of each wine of ten with words that are unlikely to be disputed because no one really knows what they mean. A well-known wine writer happened to be at the same restaurant for dinner, and when this became known, the group eagerly invited him in to taste the top Pinot Noir wine of the night. After the greetings subsided, a hush spread over the wine group as the celebrity carefully eyed the wine. The tension in the room became almost unbearable as he smelled and then drank a small portion of the special juice. After what seemed like an eternity, he said, "I like it, it is good," and with that, he turned around and walked out of the room.

Once you are accustomed to swirling Pinot Noir in a glass to aerate the wine and release its aroma, you will find yourself swirling everything in a glass including drinking water. However, never swirl sparkling wine or Champagne as it will dissipate the bubbles and the wine will go flat more quickly.

Pinot Noir is a religion with many followers. It has a sacred history, leads to rituals, sermons, festivals and feasts, and is considered divine, Pinotholicism is the religion of Pinot Noir. Members usually join

after an epiphany with Pinot Noir. Followers offer a significant percentage of their monthly income to the high priest of Pinot Noir such as Ted Lemon and Tom Rochioli. Members congregate over multiple bottles of Pinot Noir to smell, taste and pray to the holy grape. To the Pinot Noir devotee, Pinot Noir is more of a religion than a grape.

Pinot Noir is a meretricious mistress.

A great Pinot gives you emotion.

Pinot Noir is the most sensually indulgent wine of all.



HillCrest Winery, "The Birthplace of Oregon Pinot Noir" 2012

Pinot Noir: it's what's for dinner.

Pinot Noir can make you glad just to be alive.

Pinot Noir is an essential nutrient.

Crafting Pinot Noir is a delicate balance between risk and reward.

If Pinot Noir gets its hooks in you, there is no tearing away.

It's Pinot's sensuality, pure and simple.

You can have too much Pinot to drink but you can never have enough.

A balanced diet is a Pinot in each hand.

A Pinot lover is a Pinot Sapiens.

Pinot is like love: you know it when the right one comes along.

Pinot Noir has a proclivity to mutate and Pinot Gris is a mutation of Pinot Noir with a DNA profile identical to Pinot Noir. The only thing to distinguish the leaves, clusters, and vines of Pinot Gris from Pinot Noir is the coloration difference of the grapes. The Pinot Gris grape has skins that vary in color from grayish-blue ('gris' means 'gray' in French) to pink or even white. The wines produced from Pinot Gris are varying shades of yellow but can take on shades of copper or pink. Pinot Noir is often said to be a red grape masquerading as a white grape and the opposite can be said for Pinot Gris.

In Pinot veritas.

Pinot Noir shines brightest in the context of a meal.

Pinot is its own reward.

A Pinot that ages well is a Pinot that remains young.

Pinot is what Pinot does.

If Pinot is the next best thing to sex, you must be having really good sex.

Pinot Noir is as close as you can get to a romantic interlude with your clothes on.

Pinot Noir is a kaleidoscope of heady aromas and flavors that will spin your head around, set your pulse racing, and leave you totally at peace with the world.

Pinot Noir embodies sex - the kind that's wild and wonderful but rare and fleeting. It is sex in the back of your dad's station wagon, or on the front of your boyfriend's '65 Corvette. It's the best sex you've ever had, the love of your life....Michele Anna Jordan

Pinot Noir is the James Dean of wine; it's the wine women who love too much and who can't drink. Pinot Noir is Oscar Wilde, JFK Jr. and Marlene Dietrich all in your living room at the same time. It's Connie Chatterley in the rain wearing nothing but a pair of red shoes....Michele Anne Jordan

Eat, sleep, drink Pinot

Pinot Noir is more like a religion than a grape.

Pinot tastes like itself.

Great Pinot is a love letter.

Pinot Noir is not only what women want to drink, it is what they want to be: elegant, flirty, beguiling, sexy, and even mysterious. Cabernet Sauvignon, on the other hand, represents everything a man tries to emulate: aristocratic, strong, burly, longevity, and virility. This reminds me of a short story published in *Wine Enthusiast* in 1995 titled, "Strangers in the Night." He looked across the table and saw the wet lips, caring eyes and jet-black hair. She stared back at his kind, strong face knowing she had finally met her soulmate. The tasting bar was chaotic and noisy, but to the two of them, all that existed was each other. They had so much in common. They both spoke German, "BMW," she purred. "Mercedes," he laughed. They both loved literature. "*People*," she declared. "*Golf Digest*," he countered. They were so happy. Life was so good. He hailed a waiter. "Bordeaux?" he questioned hopefully. "Burgundy," she responded softly. Life could be so sad, so cruel. She caught a taxi back to

her condominium and cried over a glass of '79 Pommard-Rugiens. He drank most of a bottle of '78 Lynch-Bages and slept in the back seat of his car.

Pinot Noir and Champagne - does anything else really matter?

Burgundy at its best tops Claret at its best.

Cabernet is the king of wines, Pinot Noir is the wine of kings.

It is an exciting time to be smitten with Pinot Noir. How can it not be with the most talented and driven people in the American wine industry making it, the most passionate sommeliers promoting it, and the most enlightened and happy consumers drinking it?

Pinot Noir makes women do things they shouldn't do.

A sip of Pinot is worth 1,000 words.

The best Pinot Noir hasn't been made yet.

Few things are sweeter than a Pinot Noir hangover.



Let's get one thing straight: Pinot Noir is not Cabernet. Never has been, never will be. It's not big, heavy, tannic, thick, super-concentrated, or mind-blowingly extracted. It's more Porsche, less Mack Truck. Pinot Noir is about finesse, elegance and clarity. It's one of the few varietals translucent enough to show soil, climate and the winemaker's hand. At its best, it can be the most complex and satisfying elixir you'll ever consume. At its worst, it can be a thin, insipid swill you wouldn't even serve to relatives....Michael Lynch

It's hard to avoid the conclusion that Pinot Noir is the steamy smutty strumpet of the wine family, that slutty seductress of the night with the skirt too short, lips too full and CFM lashes gently batting in the breeze. While she has impeccable breeding, she is also fickle, temperamental and easy to covet but hard to own. But once conquered, the saucy wench with her French sophistication and wanton ways from Burgundy can be brought to heel and savored at length....*Wine X Magazine* 2003

Pinot draws ribald comparisons as a matter of course. It is variously described by sage wine judges in conservative cardigans as sensual, voluptuous and sexy. Is it the wine of passion and love? Maybe. Does it evoke those images? Most definitely....*Wine X Magazine* 2003

Pinot's bouquet is connected intrinsically with the fecund world of the forest floor, mushrooms, animals and the farmyard which suggests an amorous romp with a buxom maiden in a sun-dappled clearing. Of course, over-enthusiasts who misinterpret this statement and wind up with a farm animal may be still be incarcerated in many countries...*Wine X Magazine* 2003

It is a sad fact that inexpensive, high-quality Pinot Noir is almost non-existent....Burghound Allen Meadows

In the search for great Pinot, you may not always get what you pay for, but you will never get what you don't pay for. In short, great Pinot is never cheap....Burghound Allen Meadows

Pinot is the moral compass of the wine world....Burghound Allen Meadows

If you want to talk the Pinot talk, you need to be versed in the lexicon of Pinot Noir known as **Pinotcabulary**. A **pinotophile** is an ardent devotee of Pinot Noir who usually has a large wine cellar containing cases of ultra-premium Pinot Noir and usually knows the FedEx delivery person on a first-name basis. A **pinotaficionado** is similar to a **pinotophile** but used by those who prefer a more distinguished title and one that will not be confused with that other word - pedophile. A **pinot pimp** is a wine writer who induces others to seek out recommended Pinot Noirs. A **noiriste** is another term for a **pinotophile**. A **pinot slut** is a consumer who jumps from one Pinot Noir brand to another searching for high scoring wines with no loyalty to any brand. A **pinoterroirist** is a firm believer in the importance of terroir in creating distinctive and uniquely recognizable Pinot Noir. The term is not to be confused with **pinoterrorist** who is one that strikes suddenly at wineries and wine shops and scoops up all the desirable bottles of a small production Pinot Noir. A **pinot geek** is an outwardly normal person you picked on for being so knowledgeable about Pinot Noir but now buys the wines they make. **Pinoteers** are small groups of **pinotophiles** united for travel and drinking purposes. Think of the Three Musketeers armed with corkscrews. **Pinotology** is the science of Pinot Noir that is often considered esoteric and beyond comprehension to Cabernet drinkers. **Pinotosity** refers to the unique essence or soul of Pinot Noir. A Pinot Noir is said to have **pinotosity** when it is irresistible, mesmeric and brings you to your knees. **Pinotholicism** is the religion of Pinot Noir. Members (**pinotholics**) of the congregation usually join the church after an epiphany with Pinot Noir, subsequently believing that Pinot Noir brings them as close to God as any wine can. **Pinotspeak** is the language of Pinot Noir that includes words used to describe the sensuality and personality of Pinot Noir. The **pinotspeak** dictionary is the novel 'Sideways' by Rex Pickett that is filled with hyperbolic hosannas to Pinot Noir.

You see an awful lot of smart guys with bad Pinot, but you rarely see good Pinot with a dumb guy.

If you can't be with the Pinot you love, love the Pinot you're with.

Pinot Noir. It's silky, sleek, sexy - the same feeling you get when slipping into a satin nightgown....wine expert Leslie Sbrocco

I can count the number of great Cabernets I made at Beaulieu only by taking off my socks and shoes, but I can count the number of great Pinot Noirs on one hand with change left over....Andre Tchelistcheff

Pinot Noir is over 100 years older than Cabernet Sauvignon.

Maya: You know, can I ask you a personal question, Miles?" Why are you so into Pinot I mean, it's like a thing with you. Miles Raymond: Uh, I don't know. Um, it's a hard grape to grow, as you know. It's uh, it's thin-skinned, temperamental, ripens early. It's, you know, it's not a survivor like Cabernet, which can just grow anywhere and uh, thrive even when it's neglected. No, Pinot needs constant care and

attention. You know? And in fact, it can only grow in these really specific, little tucked-away corners of the world. And, only the most patient and nurturing of growers can do it, really. Only somebody who really takes the time to understand Pinot's potential can then coax it into its fullest expression. Then, I mean, oh its flavors, they're just the most haunting and brilliant and thrilling and subtle and ancient on the planet....From 'Sideways'

Maya, Indian goddess of illusions. Siren of shipwrecked sailors. If only you lactated Pinot Noir, you'd be perfect....Rex Pickett

My grape. The one varietal that truly enchants me, both stills and steals my heart with its elusive loveliness and false promises of transcendence. I loved her, and I would continue to follow her siren call until my wallet - or liver, whichever came first - gave out....'Sideways', Rex Pickett

Pinot Noir will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no Pinot Noir.

Pinot speaks its own voice. the subtleties in Pinot are absolutely wonderful....Kevin Furtado

Pinot envy is no ordinary oral fixation.

Pinot Noir has the wonderful aroma of the inside of a kid glove worn by a young woman....winemaker Andre Tchelistcheff

Chardonnay is a red wine masquerading as a white, and Pinot Noir is a white wine masquerading as a red....Andre Tchelistcheff

Andre Tchelistcheff once said that I had made a superb Pinot Noir (at Beaulieu in Napa) but I don't know how I did it and I was never able to do it again.

The flavors of the great red Burgundies are sensuous, often erotic, above rational discourse, and beyond the powers of measured criticism as they flaunt the conventions in favor of something rooted in emotions and passions too powerful to be taught, too ancient to be meddled with....wine writer Oz Clarke

Why is California Pinot Noir not Burgundy? Apart from some recent research that indicates that Burgundy is in northern France and California is very hot, the answers remain elusive. We Californians, avatars of the new wood odor, have perfected the art of making powerful, oaky, vegetal, wines with little of the charm, finesse, perfume or achingly tender texture of the finest wines made from Pinot Noir.

Malolactic fermentation is important for Pinot Noir because it lowers the total acidity, adds complexity, and renders the wine microbiologically stable so filtration is not necessary.

At its best, Pinot Noirs are the most romantic of wines, with so voluptuous a perfume, so sweet an edge, so powerful a punch that, like falling in love, they make the blood run hot and the soul wax embarrassingly poetic....Joel Fleishman

I would like to quickly point out that I have been preaching the bible of St. Pinot Noir for well over two decades. It has been my contention that there is no more cerebral or complex beverage on Earth than the multifaceted, chameleon-like, mysterious and romantic "Pineau". To twist an off-used expression in the wine business...There is white wine, real wine (meaning 'red'), and then there is Pinot Noir....Paul Root

Great Burgundy smells of shit. It is most surprising, but the French recognized long ago, “ca sent la merde” and “ca sent le purin” being common expressions of the Côte....wine writer Anthony Hanson

Sonoma County’s Russian River Valley is unquestionably the greatest location for Pinot Noir in the US and possibly the world....winemaker Merry Edwards

Seductive, elegant, and earthy, the mysterious Pinot Noir unites friends, food and time into a glorious dining experience....Burke Owens Masa’s Restaurant San Francisco.

Pinot would probably even get jealous if there was another lovely Pinot sitting in a glass nearby....Rod Phillips

Picking a Pinot Noir is like starting a romance - the success rate is not high.



Behind every Prince is a Princess

No grape is so sensitive to glass as Pinot Noir....Riedel Vinum series Burgundy glass

Pinot Noir is the most feminine of grapes - beautiful, fickle, moody, spiteful, elegant, truculent, sexy, and absolutely delicious....Rod Phillips

Of all the accomplishments in American winemaking and viticulture in the last quarter of the 20th century, none has been as impressive as the dramatic evolution of Pinot Noir from near-dismal failure to celebrated success poised at the threshold of greatness....wine writer Steve Pitcher

Good, balanced Pinot has a sense of richness, roundness, body and texture you can’t find in any other grape....winemaker Jim Clendenen

To me, Pinot Noir is a house of cards and every manipulation adds more cards....winemaker Joe Davis

Falling in love with Pinot Noir is easy to do, but be prepared, for a tempestuous love affair it will be....Cathleen Francisco

My wife claims I love Pinot more than her. But I always faithfully reply, "I love you just the same."....Rusty Gaffney

A truly great burgundy can be greater than a top Bordeaux, but it's so rare that one comes across such a wine....Hardy Rodenstock

Winemaker for Viader Vineyards Delia Viader when asked what her last supper would be said perhaps a great Pinot Noir with handmade pasta and fresh truffles.

Pinot Noir is the most difficult and demanding grape to grow and vinify well and is especially prone to being out of whack during its first couple of years. It can change flavor, balance, even color in a brief time frame, then flip backwards, shut down or simply sulk. It may have its youthful moments of fleshy, cherry/berry glory, to be sure. But it's just as likely to be showing its worst, not it's best when first released....wine writer Paul Gregutt

Miles in the novel 'Sideways' describes a 1996 Comte Armand Pommard Burgundy: "As the wine rose to our lips, we were vertiginously winched up to a more rarified plateau. It was as if we had just left the harbor, and entered the sea as if the clouds had parted and the sky had colored lavender and wraithlike little sprites were dancing on the surface of the water. Now *this* is Pinot Noir....Rex Pickett

Miles in the novel 'Sideways': Pinot Noir is the one varietal that truly enchants, both stills and steals my heart with its elusive loveliness and transcendence. I loved her, and I would continue to follow her siren call until my wallet - or liver, whichever came first - gave out....Rex Pickett

I think Pinot is one of the most useful wines. It's good with fish or meat, or even sitting around getting pissed with and there is nothing wrong with that either....Sam Neill, actor and winery owner

Pinot Noir should be a princess, not a monster. Who would you rather eat with?....winemaker David Lett

I am unconvinced that there is a single definition of "Pinotosity." The charm is that the grape can wear so many different clothes and sometimes none at all....Jasper Morris MW

My wife says I am busy with Pinot Noir every waking moment. Not true, I also dream about it....Rusty Gaffney

And here's the secret: the making of Pinot Noir is like making a Model T Ford, just a few simple steps....Winemaker and winery owner Josh Jensen

The Bordelaise live in constant fear  
Of a small crop and so every year  
Is robustly portrayed  
As "The Best of the Decade",  
But it's just Pinot envy you hear....A.D. Bradford

If a wine could make a person cry, it would have to be Pinot Noir....Eric Asimov



You can always tell who the most serious winemakers in California are by the amount of Burgundy in their cellar....John Kapon

Burgundy I always think of as the woman of thirty: it has more body than claret, is richer, more generous, with a finer perfume; but it is very intoxicating and should be used with self restraint....Frank Harris

Although it's often described as the grape of the sensualists owing to its peculiar blend of the earthy and ethereal, Pinot Noir sometimes seems better suited to the care of psychiatrist than winemakers....wine writer Lettie Teague

I can remember when liking Pinot Noir practically labeled you an eccentric. Pinot was an afterthought, a paltry substitute for Cabernet and Merlot. But Pinot Noir is what the real wine drinkers now want to drink. Forget California Cabs and their sameness. Pinot Noir, with seductive fruit and supple tannins is the Chosen One....wine writer Josh Farrell 1997

I think Pinot Noir likes to be done in small batches, with a craft person hovering about, paying attention to every detail. At the same time, Pinot Noir does not like to be pushed too hard in any direction - it has its own ideas and resists too much interference. One has to be open to the way Pinot Noir communicates, both in the vineyard and in the fermenter and is able to react with delicate inputs. That's why it makes it a glorious, heartbreaking challenge....winemaker Kent Fortner

There is truly nothing as luscious as the full ripe flavor of Pinot Noir grapes at picking time. The taste of the grapes was so rich, I had to take a breath after my first bite to give time to process the explosion in my mouth....winery owner Ross Halleck

DRC Romanée-Conti: The haunting lingering spell it casts over you. It is unearthly in its beauty. It is the closest one will ever get to a liquid lullaby...Serene Sutcliffe MW

The notion of consistently excellent Pinot Noir has always seemed practically oxymoronic, like the concept of safe sex....Jan McInerney

Pinot is collected by people who drink. Bordeaux is collected by people who collect.

Do you have feelings of inadequacy? Do you suffer from shyness? Do you sometimes wish you were more assertive? If you answered yes to any of these questions, Pinot Noir may be your salvation. Pinot Noir is the safe and natural way to feel better and more confident about yourself and your actions. Pinot Noir will let you show the world you are ready to do almost anything. A committed regiment of regular glasses of Pinot Noir will allow you to live the way you want. Stop hiding and start living with Pinot Noir. Caution: Pinot NoFir is not for everyone. Women who are pregnant or nursing should not use Pinot Noir, but women who wouldn't mind being pregnant or nursing are encouraged to try it.

I'm Doon with Noir....Winemaker Randall Graham

Pinot is like the little girl who had a curl: when it is good, it is very, very good; when it is bad, it is horrid.

I think if you asked most people what's the next best place outside of Burgundy that makes Pinot Noir, hopefully, it's the Willamette Valley....winemaker Steve Doerner

A great Pinot chases its own tail....actor Kurt Russell

“Pinotism” is a cult within the wine world: no other grape commands attention like this one....Andrew Jefford

The slender, sloping shoulders of Burgundy bottles have a “more feminine shape” than the more masculine profile of the “stiff, upright Bordeaux bottle.”....writer Rod Phillips

Bordeaux is an intellectual wine. Burgundy is entirely sensual. You discuss a god Bordeaux but you simply enjoy a good Burgundy....wine writer Dan Berger

Burgundy fanatics are prepared to drink a lot of mediocre wine that didn't age well for that one opportunity to drink an elixir that reaches a pinnacle Cabernet can never attain....wine writer Bob Thompson

Succeeding with Pinot Noir means more than success with other wines. It's the hardest grape to grow. The hardest wine to make....winemaker Gina Gallo

There is a maddening duality to Pinot Noir for me..and I suppose others as well. It can both captivate my imagination and bewilder it. For most, it is the last true frontier in fine wine enjoyment...Scott Torrence

Pinot Noir is not just for breakfast anymore....winemaker Kathy Joseph

Pinot Noirs illicit a cornucopia of descriptors.

The beauty of Pinot Noir lies in delicacy, finesse, understated flavors, and silky texture.

Pinot Noir looks for warm sites in cool areas.

A consortium of distinguished Pinot Noir winemakers in California have released the startling results of clandestine research carried out over the past five years. Deep in the wine cellars of several prominent wineries, chemical analyses have revealed that Pinot Noir extract is the primary ingredient in Viagra. Everyone knew it was a “manly” thing to make Pinot Noir, and now we know why. Winemakers have discovered that Viagra contains an alcohol-free extract of a very musky and virile Pinot Noir extract known as the Clooney clone. In the commercial processing of the Pinot Noir grape, it was evident that the cold soak was omitted for obvious reasons. After this discovery was announced, the Prince of Pinot sadly remarked, “I always knew Pinot Noir was liquid Viagra, but I wish I had thought of putting it into pill form first.” Pfizer Pharmaceuticals refused to comment (sour grapes). April fools!!

Some vintages of Pinot Noir go through periods when they do not express themselves very well and sometimes it is a precursor to decline, but sometimes they come out of it and return to glory. This is called a dumb phase. As a general rule, the more substantial the varietal, the more possible it is that the wine can go through a dumb phase. It is more likely with a great and concentrated vintage of red Burgundy, even more likely, with great Cabernet Sauvignon, and more likely still with wines like Port. That said, Pinot Noir is an articulate and beautiful woman in a silk chemise. ‘Dumb’ is rarely a descriptor that I find appropriate....Winemaker Ted Lemon

That damn Prince of Pinot is one helluva pimp. He makes me spend a whole bunch of money and I will continue to do so.

Pinot Noir - one night it brings you close to heaven, the next night you get slapped in the face.

As far back as 1897 an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* made no bones about slighting California Pinot Noir: “Much wine is made and sold in California as Burgundy, but we have produced no wine which resembles the Burgundies of France. Our Pinots have proved a failure, probably from the lack of proper methods and care of fermentation. Obviously, that’s all changed.

In *The Quarterly Review of Wines* in 1996, Gerald D. Boyd wrote, “The two best Pinot Noir vineyard regions are Santa Maria and the Russian River Valley. After that, Carneros and the Pinnacles.

Among Pinot Noir clones, Pommard is my paramour....Rusty Gaffney

Tune in to ESPN: Easy Sipping Pinot Noir.

When it comes to older Pinots, there is no definitive rating or judgment - just snapshots frozen in time and eternal memories that follow.

Despite all the comparisons between Cabernet and Pinot Noir that have preoccupied us for years, Bordeaux (and, by extension, the producers of Cabernet in California and elsewhere) takes itself very seriously, while Burgundy (and, again by extension, all other producers of Pinot Noir) likes to kick up its heels and frolic....wine writer Gerald Asher



It is futile to try to make a “Burgundy-style” Pinot Noir anywhere else than in Burgundy. It is not a question of who makes better Pinot Noir, it’s a question of style and Burgundians have been at it for centuries....Catherine Leclerc of Domaine Rene Leclerc

Matt Kramer after a tasting of California and Burgundy Pinot Noir wines: “They (the red Burgundies) had all the power you could possibly want in a Pinot Noir. But like watching Roger Federer play tennis, the sheer ease of delivery made you forget the essential underlying strength,”

Pinot Noir is the poet’s grape.

Take Pinot Noir to California and it often goes native in an alarming way, shedding its Gallic intellectual vigor and displaying a fruity, flirty, New World hedonism.... wine writer Jay McInerney

For all sorts of reasons, success could spoil Pinot Noir. It could drive up prices for wines already in short supply. It could encourage people to make nominal Pinots that taste like generic red wine....wine writer John Winthrop Hager

The riper styles: I've made them and I have gotten high scores from them, But they weren't my best Pinots by any means....winemaker Bob Cabral

When you pick overripe, you get a sweet fruitiness. That's appealing, it's one aspect of Pinot Noir, but it's not the most intriguing....winemaker Adam Tolmach

Michael Browne commenting on his style of Pinot Noir: "It's nontraditional now, but in 30 years this will be the traditional style of Pinot Noir....Michael Browne while at Kosta Browne

Good Pinot Noir has a delicate elegance and a luscious succulence that can transport you to another place. It is not the stop-traffic beauty of bombshell Jessica Alba or thick-lipped Angelina Jolie, but more the classic elegance of Catherine Deneuve. The charms of Pinot Noir are subtle and require patience. Pinot Noir rewards those with astute palates and experience. Great aged Pinot Noir provides the most ethereal wine-drinking pleasure known to this person.

Pinot Noir is difficult. I often say the best one hasn't been made yet, that the winemaker hasn't been born who will make the perfect Pinot Noir. It is finicky in the vineyard, a chameleon in the winery, and a rollercoaster ride as it ages in the bottle. That it is so variable, so unpredictable, is part of the fascination. The silky mouthfeel, the perfumed aromas, the long, drawn-out finish are the equivalent of bottled poetry....winemaker Harry Hansen

Consistency was and is the holy grail of Pinot Noir. It's like a Grateful Dead song, when it's great it is so unbelievably great, but when it's not, it's well....Andrea Immer

Pinot Noir is not Pamela Anderson, it's much more elegant and refined, like Grace Kelly or Nicole Kidman or Audrey Hepburn....Joseph De Lissio

It is not an intellectual wine like Cabernet, it's a much more sensual wine. Pinot Noir is the most pleasurable, sensually indulgent wine of all....Michael Bonaccorsi

You fall in love with Pinot Noir. The fragrance in a good Pinot Noir makes you close your eyes. It is the most seductive wine. It's very, very hard to say no to....Madeline Triffon MS

Part of what makes Pinot Noir so exciting is it's elusive nature. From one moment to the next, the aromas and flavors of a good Pinot Noir can change in the glass, making it difficult to pin down. Sometimes tasting Pinot Noir is like a game of musical chairs - you have to stop the music arbitrarily, capturing the wine at one point in its evolution....wine writer Eric Asimov

I love cellaring Pinot. Cellaring requires patience and money, both of which I have little, so while everyone else is stacking away full-bodied reds that won't be seen for another 20 years, I'm cellaring Pinot. It's half the price and I'll have it out in 5 years when, if well chosen, it should have added layers of those wet earth, truffle and roast duck aromas that Pinot nuts go wild about....sommelier Simon Hill

When people talk about Pinot Noir, they often talk about funky, gamy, secondary characters, which is fine, but I want those characteristics to come with time, not as a young wine straight out of the bottle. What I'm looking for in my young Pinots is the detail of aroma, brightness of fruit, freshness, and varietal purity. The funkiness will come if you give it time....winemaker William Downie

All's fair in love and wine. I recently heard of a divorce settlement in which the wife got the estate in Beverly Hills, the villa in Tuscany, the condominium in Tahoe, the Mercedes, the Jaguar, the investment portfolio, control of the software company, all bank accounts, monthly alimony of \$120,000, and full custody of the three children. The husband, however, was ecstatic - he got the Pinot Noir collection.

If Yogi Berra wrote about Pinot Noir: When I drink a great Pinot Noir, it's déjà vu all over again. If Pinot Noir was perfect, it wouldn't be. You can taste a lot by tasting. If the people don't want to come to the winery, nobody's going to stop them.

There are many ways to the recognition of truth and Burgundy is one of them....Lask Dinesen

It upsets me when I hear people say that a little bit of Brett is ok in Pinot Noir. I think, "obviously you don't know what it is like without it, or you wouldn't say that. It takes the magic away."....wine writer Matt Thomson

Pinot Noir is the glass coffee table of grapes. If you start putting your hands on it, you're going to leave fingerprints....winemaker John Dragonette

Cabernet Sauvignon might be known as the "king of wine," but everybody who knows about wine knows that Pinot Noir is the actual "wine of kings." It's probably due in part to the fact that the Champagne region of France - known for its Pinot Noir, which is one of the grapes used in the production of Champagne - was part of the personal royal estate of the French kings, and partly because the only official "coronation" cathedral is in Reims....Jeff Burkhart

With Pinot Noir I'm looking for perfume, freshness, delicacy, texture and harmony...and I'm also looking for that sweet attack at the front of the palate which you can get with a good Pinot....Richard Bampfield MW

Finding great Pinot is a challenge, but it's not a job. Let it be an adventure.

Pinot envy: infatuation with size.

It's not red wine, it's Pinot Noir.

Pinot Noir looks for warm sites in cool areas.

Foundation Plant Services (FPS) in Davis has about 95 unique Pinot Noir clones in its collection made available to the wine industry. Variations among Pinot Noir clones fit into four groups: (1) Pinot fin, (2) loose-clustered Mariafeld, (3) upright shoots or Pinot droit, and (4) fruitful or futile Pinot fructifer. Most California vineyards employ Pinot fin clones such as 2A and 4 and these produce higher fruit yields and greater pruning weights than the Dijon clones. The Pinot family also includes Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Meunier....viticulturist Stan Grant

Stem inclusion in Pinot Noir brings depth, texture, fragrance, age ability, and that mysterious element of intrigue that all great Pinot should have and aspire to. The aromatics can be thrilling and literally spine-tingling....winemaker Jeff Fink

Winemakers never have to dress up to do their job. They don't actually make wine since "Wine is made in the vineyard. They try to stay out of the way and let the vineyard speak for itself." The hardest part of their job is the picking decision but they don't pick the grapes themselves. Harvest only

lasts a month or two so winemakers have 10 months of vacation. Winemaking could be the cushiest job ever.

The bravest winemakers make Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir is difficult to read and is a chameleon in the barrel, changing from day to day. It is a finicky grape that challenges a winemaker's prowess. That said, Pinot Noir is a wine that responds to "hands-off" treatment so Pinot Noir winemakers don't have to do much. They let the Pinot Noir grapes make the wine.

Umami in Pinot Noir is described as savory, pungent, and meaty, and is secondary to glutamates common in aged cheeses, meats and wines.

I can remember when liking Pinot Noir practically labeled you a weirdo. California Pinot Noir was an afterthought, a sorry substitute for Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. But now Pinot Noir has caught the fancy of both serious and not-so-serious wine drinkers. The fact that Pinot Noir is a prima donna - touchy, difficult to grow, and notoriously fussy to work with - makes it all the more charming.

Sometimes when I think about all the great Pinot Noir I have drunk, I feel a little shame. Then I reflect on all of the passionate vineyard workers and winemakers and all of their hopes and dreams. I realize that it is more admirable to have drunk all this Pinot Noir and allow their dreams to come true than be selfish and worry about my liver. It is the least a prince can do.

Pinot Noir in its pure and elegant, even feminine, form is replete with subtleties, complexity, sensible alcohol, and sublime balance. Here is an analogy in reference to pumped-up, hedonistic Pinot Noirs. Suppose you go to a good tailor and ask him to sew you a suit, but he measures you improperly and makes the suit too large. When he is finished, he has masterfully crafted a handsome suit for you, but it is too large and out of proportion to your size. The same situation applies to Pinot Noir. The super-ripe and extracted style of Pinot Noir is often well-made technically, but they are too big, too grandly proportioned for Pinot Noir and are more like Syrah....Rene Chazottes MS

Outrageous superlatives for Pinot Noir seen published in wine reviews include: "Drink now if you prefer your Pinot Noir al dente." "So juicy and tasty you can nibble at it." "Enough t'n & a to fill a chorus line." "Like beef stew on a bed of flowers." "Sweet brown sugar sprinkled on top of oatmeal." "Barnyard with too much barn." "No cleavage to speak of but great cheekbones." "Wham-bam style." "4.1 in the 40." "Sis Boom Baa." "With a mouthful so sensuous you will need a shower afterwards." "Whoa, yeah, hell yeah." "Fresher than a hickey from a strawberry blonde." "More body and spice than Tyra Banks on the Victoria Secret's runway." "Soft as the hair of an angel." "Round, rich and Rubenesque." "Aroma of hallowed churches and saddle leather." "Pinotesque." "So rich and plenty of fruit it seems like a Grenache." "More flavors than Baskin-Robbins." "Palate lingering like what I would imagine to be a multiple orgasm." "Quaffable but far from transcendent." "Elvis on velvet soft texture." "A flamboyant sucker." "Is that got Petite Verdot in it?", "Wraps you in silk pajamas," "A finish long like a 3-hour movie you don't want to end," "A nose like Chanel #5," "Liquid viagra," "A veritable wine-gasm," "Very leathery but in a \$2,000 Prada coat kind of way," "Creamy like the most perfect thighs," "Like beef stew on a bed of purple flowers," "One taste and true romance," "I thought I could live without Pinot until you came to me," "Got the dream but not the drive," "Fresher than a hickey from a strawberry blonde," "More body and spice than Tyra Banks on the Victoria Secret runway," "Like a fire sale at the candy store - fruity and smoky," and "A female bodybuilder of a wine."

The smells of the Pinot Noir grape - spices, earth, musk and barnyard - are very similar to those associated with the principal male smell, androstenone. Truffles, vanilla and oak smells of Pinot Noir aged in oak barrels are also androstenone-like. When the smells of Pinot Noir are combined with the psychological effects of alcohol the door can be opened to lust, and desire and bring men and women together.

Pinot Noir is the best sex you've ever had, the love of your life. It is the James Dean of wine, it's the wine women who love too much can't drink.

Practically everyone who has worked in the wine industry has a famous story about the "Dean of American Winemaking," Andre Tchelistcheff, or can relate a quote by him. Examples abound. "Appreciating old wine is like making love to a very old lady. It is possible. It can even be enjoyable, but it requires a bit of imagination." "This wine has the sensual aroma of a woman's leather glove with a hint of her perfume and personal scent." When asked about California Pinot Noir, Tchelistcheff said, "Young man, as the sun sets, go into the garden of Madame de Latour and pick one of her finest roses, just as it has begun to open. Take it home. Put it in a vase without water. The next morning, put your nose into the heart of that dying rose. Inhale the unique perfume. There you will have the scent to guide you to a perfect Pinot Noir."

David Lett, so revered by his peers that he was affectionately called, "Papa Pinot," grew up on a farm in Utah, and after graduating from the University of Utah in 1961, arrived in San Francisco waiting to begin dental school when a road trip to nearby Napa Valley wine country led to a life-changing epiphany. He enrolled instead in a two-year viticulture course at the University of California at Davis. After graduating in 1964, he became interested in cool climate winegrowing and found the Willamette Valley of Oregon an appealing location despite the sentiment of the time that Oregon was not suitable for the successful cultivation of European variety wine grapes. At the young age of 25 years, Lett gathered 3,000 grape cuttings from certified vineyards in California and traveled north to the Willamette Valley in February of 1965. He started planting his cuttings on a rented nursery plot near Corvallis on February 22, 1965, according to his personal journal. This was the first planting of Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay in the Willamette Valley, and the first planting of Pinot Gris outside of Europe. After he found an ideal vineyard site in an abandoned prune orchard in the Red Hills of Dundee, Lett relocated his vines. Inspired by red-tailed hawks that made their nest (eyrie) in the trees at the top of the vineyard site, Lett, along with his new spouse, Diana, christened their new winery The Eyrie Vineyard. Lett honed his winemaking craft through a career spanning almost 40 commercial vintages, holding the distinction of producing a single vineyard Pinot Noir longer than any other winemaker in the U.S. at the time of his passing in October 2008 at the age of 69.

In the absence of any obvious faults, the more you pay for your wine, the better it will taste. Why? In part, because most of us expect more expensive wine to taste better....Charles Spencer

'Sideways' pumped up the popularity of Pinot Noir. Before the movie came out, people didn't know how to pronounce Pinot Noir. That gave people a comfort zone of getting their heads around this mysterious grape. It made it approachable....Chad Melville

Heavy wine bottles continue to be offered by Pinot Noir producers despite the fact these behemoths don't fit into your wine racks at home, are unwieldy to pour, and they are a snub to environmental consciousness. Their popularity is loosely based on the perception that consumers will consider the wine contained therein of higher quality and worth the higher prices.

Why do so many wineries tout their wines with back-label BS? Back labels should inform, not bore us with trite verbiage. For example, a recent chest-pounding label noted, "Our tried-and-true winemaking techniques produce wines of amazing consistency." Instead of insulting me, please inform me with a description of the wine's aroma and flavor, recommended food pairings, how it was vinified, and where it came from.

There is a curious phenomenon in the California wine industry called "hostage" wines. These are limited-production, highly-desirable wines that are sold directly only to select mailing list devotees who

are helplessly held captive by the desired wines. These wines also carry the moniker, “cult” wines,” that is, wines that are furiously sought after by wine lovers. Cabernet Sauvignon wines are the most prevalent example with Pinot Noir second. Mailing list members have been known to take others captive by selling their allotments at a significant profit. In truth, buyers of hostage wines frequently never drink them since they are so valuable and can bring significant profit to the secondary market. These “wardens” of hostage wines, who are fortunate enough to be on the mailing list, show no mercy in pursuing their profits. Fortunately, wine lovers often realize that there are a significant number of wines comparable to hostage wines that can be easily and openly bought from other fine producers. Freed from the shackles of allocation, these runaways are free to explore the myriad of California wine choices.

Wax closures are the devil in disguise. They charm you with their sexy look, but the ensuing hassle when you try to open the wine negates the glamorous appearance. Plus, who enjoys wax fragments in their wine? Wax closures are haute couture with a vengeance.

Why is it that those who can't make wine, score them?

Do you know the difference between a doctor and a wine writer? A doctor earns more money but a wine worker gets to drink on the job.

Since when did “limited production” equate with high quality? It usually means the production was limited by the amount of grapes the producer was allocated by a famous grower or reduced by the amount of wine that was crappy and had to be declassified.

In 1991, Frenchman Serge Reynaud was interviewed by Morley Safer for the Sixty Minutes television show on CBS News about the protection of the French against myocardial infarction despite having higher risk factors than Americans. In fact, the cardiovascular mortality of the French in 1991 was 3.5 times lower than that of the Americans. He proposed that moderate and regular consumption of wine with meals should be a determining factor in the superior cardiovascular health of the French. 30 years later, this “French Paradox” is continuing to be true, as the French still have the highest classical risk factors (cholesterol, smoking, blood pressure and consumption of saturated fats), but the lowest cardiovascular mortality in the world, passing the Japanese, being at the same time, the world's leading wine drinkers.

Many rumors have arisen of “suitcase” material from famous Burgundy vineyards, particularly La Tâche and Romanée-Conti (so-called DRC suitcase selections), planted in various California vineyards such as Chalone, Calera, and Pisoni, but no one has admitted to such for fear of violating French intellectual property law, not to mention, United States importation laws. That said, many California wineries and vineyards today openly tout that their vineyard(s) contain vines originating from the budwood of DRC vineyards. There are so many such claims that I sense that at least some of these assertions may be more of a marketing ploy than truth. Realistically, the fact that suitcase material originated from a DRC vineyard is no guarantee that it will perform well at every site in California. There is currently no DNA testing available that can identify the Pinot Noir clone of a grapevine so the origin of these DRC selections remains a mystery.

It has become clear over the past 50+ years that the proper clones must be matched to the appropriate site. In other words, the site trumps clones. The heritage clones are consistent performers but they do not necessarily meet or exceed expectations at some sites.

In Rex Pickett's follow-up book to *Sideways*, titled *Vertical*, Miles has been invited to be the Master of Ceremonies at the International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC). Many unforeseen comedies play out



and considerable debauchery ensues on Miles' and Jack's trip to Oregon. Jack takes Viagra to counteract the effects of alcohol is the funniest interlude in the book. Concluding the Opening Ceremonies speech at IPNC, Miles coaxes the assembled, "Let's all go get F\*&ED UP ON PINOT!" The golden rule of cellaring Pinot Noir is not to let it slip past its prime. When a wine dead, it will never come back to life. When you discover a Pinot Noir at its peak, pull the cork on every bottle you own, invite me over, and let's party.

The makers of Pinot Noir are lunatic-fringe, questers after the holy grail....Marc de Villiers

Pinot Noir is enigmatic, flamboyant and engaging at one moment and acerbic and angular at another....wine writer Dan Berger

Pinot Noir is a true living species...like humans, a joy to be with one day and moody bastards the next....Maurice DiMarino

It's got to be better than wine tasting with Pierce. He refused to drink Pinot Noir because he thought it was French for "black penis"....Jack Winger, Community Show

For me, the connection that Pinot Noir creates to us, that connection to the place that it provides, I don't think is matched by anything else we consume. I can't think of any food or any other beverage that begins to connect us to place in such a complex way. For me, Pinot Noir is a completely blank canvas and everything you smell and taste has everything to do with where it's grown. Everything....winemaker Ken Wright

At one time, I thought of nicknaming winemaker Burt Williams the 'Pontiff of Pinot', but he was such a humble, regular guy, the moniker seemed like too much of an aggrandizement. I thought that just plain 'Burt' was good enough because when you mention Pinot Noir and Burt in the same breath, everyone knows who you are talking about. Burt's career will show that winemaking, like any craft, is a God-given talent, enhanced by education and experience. Still, it is a craft for which some people are more blessed than others. Burt showed that great wine, and in particular Pinot Noir, can be produced without artifice. Intrusive winemaking methods are simply not desired or required. Technology and expensive equipment can be useful winemaking adjuncts but are not requirements for fine wine production....the legacy of Burt Williams by Rusty Gaffney

I don't know why I should bother trying to explain such a great wine to mere mortals such as you. It's like explaining rain to people who don't know what water is. But, I will make an attempt. At first whiff, the aromas are very feminine and may make some question their sexuality. The wine explodes in the mouth, saturating the palate and I am certain this is a masculine wine in drag. But it is good and a wine to remember. 1,000 cases produced, but not for sale because it is the family's private reserve!....*Wine X* magazine

There are many wine-based newsletters and blogs. I have not found any that come near to your in-depth reporting of the Pinot Noir segment of the wine business. I am always amazed at how much territory you cover to get your newsletter out each issue and appreciate the expense you go to in order to get it to us....Richard Alfaro, Alfaro Family Vineyards

No one comes close to matching your contributions to the American Pinot story....David Adelsheim, Adelsheim Vineyard

# The Prince Retires (this time for good)

On August 1, 2019, I retired, saying, “The Prince retires, but his spirit lives on in a good bottle of Pinot Noir.” Six months later, I was back in the saddle again, publishing the *PinotFile* online with renewed eagerness. This time I am honestly retiring for good after leaving a legacy of 576 issues of the *PinotFile*. Although I will no longer write about Pinot Noir and review Pinot Noir wines, my website, [princeofpinot.com](http://princeofpinot.com), will remain available to pinotphiles in perpetuity.

The inspiration and derivation of the name of my online wine newsletter, the *PinotFile*, came about because of my pent-up urge to share my passion for Pinot Noir with others and a desire to pursue a second career after retiring from the private practice of ophthalmology.

I sat down on a Sunday evening, April 22, 2001, to be exact, and began to type a one-page missive on Pinot Noir that I intended to send out by email to the twenty members of my wine-tasting club, Le Grand Crew, and a few other friends. I alerted my inaugural readers as follows. “Every Sunday night I am going to email a short newsletter titled the *PinotFile* to keep you apprised of news in the pinotophile world.” I felt like an evangelist who needed to spread the gospel of Pinot Noir. After finishing the single page, I hit the send box, and the *PinotFile* was off and running.

With Volume 7, Issue 1, of the *PinotFile*, in June 2002, the *PinotFile* took on a four-page weekly format and was published on the prince of pinot website. I was amazed at how quickly changes had occurred in the world of Pinot Noir since the *PinotFile* began seven years prior. The internet had become a powerful medium for sending to the world the compelling stories behind every good bottle of Pinot Noir. The *PinotFile* became a joyous pursuit, a redeeming pleasure that coincided with the rise in popularity of Pinot Noir domestically after the movie ‘Sideways’ debuted in 2004.

As the years and issues rolled by, I infused the *PinotFile* with a purpose. I chose to circumvent the many wine publications of the time that centered primarily around lengthy lists of wine-tasting notes and scores. My intent was to find and report the compelling stories behind every good bottle of Pinot Noir. I strove to provide a truthful judgment and only feature and recommend Pinot Noir wines that I deemed worthy of reader interest. I always emphasized that every wine drinker possessed a different palate so the recommended wines were meant to be only a starting point for the reader’s own exploration of Pinot Noir.

Eventually, the *PinotFile* offered much more. It presented first-hand colorful interviews of domestic Pinot Noir winegrowers and winemakers including periodic appellation and regional profiles of pinotcentric wine regions, including photographs and maps, and offered extensive tasting notes that included winery verticals, regionals horizontals, barrels samples, and older vintages. On-the-ground reports from wineries were included as well as reports from the many post-Sideways Pinot Noir festivals and celebrations in California and Oregon.

I did not believe in assigning scores to wines initially, only reporting the scores of other wine critics. I discarded this practice by 2008 upon the urging of my readers and began to accompany my reviews of Pinot Noir wines with scores based on the popular 100-point system.

I like the style of Pinot Noir that is in front of me. I am not a slave to any one ironclad Pinot Noir mystique. I recommend embracing all styles of Pinot Noir, finding purpose and charm in them all, without insisting that Pinot Noir adamantly adhere to traditional roles.

Soon I was inspired by many testimonials from grateful readers who seemed happy with my unpretentious and humorous approach to reviewing Pinot Noir, and I was truly appreciative of each and every one. I particularly enjoyed one feedback from a reader. "If I drank over 1,200 wines during the year, my wife would accuse me of having a drinking problem. You do it, call it research, brag about it, and gain respect among your friends. Way to go!"

Along the way, I have weathered boxed, bagged and canned Pinot Noir, reduced alcohol Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Blanc, Trader Joe's Pinot Noir, Meiomi Pinot Noir, the onslaught of mediocre Napa Valley winery Pinot Noir. I have seen the emergence of screw cap closure and glass closure for Pinot Noir, both of which have stalled in popularity in part due to the reduction in frequency (but not the complete elimination) of cork taint.

When I began publishing the *PinotFile* in 2001, there were a total of 23,046 acres of Pinot Noir planted in California, a minuscule percentage of grapevine plantings. Pinot Noir plantings doubled by 2021 with California's total Pinot Noir acreage at 47,245 acres second in total acreage only to Cabernet Sauvignon. Today, California is the leading domestic producer of Pinot Noir. The increase in plantings of Pinot Noir is even more dramatic in Oregon. In 2001, there were only 4,834 acres. Today, Pinot Noir is by far the leading planted variety in Oregon with 41,899 vines, accounting for 60% of all planted acreage.

The legacy of the *PinotFile* newsletter and *Prince of Pinot* website:

- 1) The first wine newsletter exclusively devoted to domestic Pinot Noir and one group of wine lovers known as pinotphiles.
- 2) The only significant wine newsletter offered free as a noble and thoroughly redeeming accomplishment possible because of the financial base of my previous career in medicine.
- 3) The first wine publication to include chemistry details as part of informative wine reviews including ABC, pH, TA and RS.
- 4) A unique Winery Directory with nearly 2,900 winery profiles of primarily domestic wineries focusing on Pinot Noir. This is the largest Pinot Noir winery directory on the internet. There is also a very large Vineyard Directory. Wine reviews can be searched by winery or vineyard name.
- 5) The latest news of the Pinot Noir community was included in each issue in the Pinot Briefs section.
- 6) Multiple terms were added to the Pinot Noir lexicon known as pinotcabulary including pinotophile, pinotology, pinotosity, pinotspeak, pinotholicism, pinot geek, pinotcentric, pinotaficionado, pinoteer, pinot pimp, and noiriste. Updates and the newest information on the relationship between wine in moderation and health was periodically detailed and included summaries of peer-reviewed scientific research. No similar cataloguing of this wine and health information is available on the internet.
- 7) An innovative and highly useful marketing tool was the availability of links between winery write-ups and wine reviews in the *PinotFile* and wineries.
- 8) Grape Radio podcasts that were Pinot Noir-related and involved the Prince were accessible on the Prince of Pinot website. These wine podcasts were groundbreaking at a time when podcasts were in their infancy.
- 9) Comprehensive coverage of every Pinot Noir festival and celebration in California and Oregon including the World of Pinot Noir, Pinot Days, Pinot Paradise, Wine & Fire, Pinot & Paella, Pinot Noir Summit, West of West Festival, International Pinot Noir Celebration, and more.

There are so many people to thank for their expertise and support to compose the *PinotFile* over the past 21 years. Steve Muller designed my first website and logo, and David Isaacs managed my website in the early years with dedication and a smile. Peter Rowell, as a result of his technical know-how and Wendy Coy, because of her graphic design abilities, created and helped maintain the

modern version of the Prince of Pinot website. Michael McDonald, another computer techie, assisted me over the past several years in keeping the website running as well as trolling the immense amount of data therein to provide me with valuable information. My son, Dane, the current COO of Ashes & Diamonds Winery in Napa, who taught me everything I know about computers, and faithfully posted every issue of the *PinotFile* online for the past 14 years. Master Sommelier Rene Chazottes encouraged me and taught me integrity. My spouse, Patti, somehow had the patience to put up with my wacky devotion to a grape and has stuck with me for 45 years. And finally, my mother Dorothy, who always said when I was a youngster that I would become a doctor or a writer. Bless her heart, she was wrong. I became both.



The “team” - Rusty, Dane and Patti celebrating my retirement at Healdsburg’s Troubadour Bread & Bistro November 2022

**\*\*Notice to wineries, winemakers, and public relations agencies: I no longer accept Pinot Noir wines for review! All past published online wine reviews will remain available online on my website.**