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## Skewis Wines

Hank and Maggie Skewis have been quietly making high quality, complex Pinot Noirs from vineyards in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties since 1994. The first grapes were purchased in 1994 from the Floodgate Vineyard in Mendocino County's Anderson Valley. The philosophy here is seeking quality grapes from low-yielding vines, gently crushing the grapes, then fermenting very warm for maximum extraction and finally pressing into Burgundian oak barrels for primary and secondary malolactic fermentation. The Pinots are bottled after 18 months of barrel aging, unfiltered and unfiltered, and aged an additional 4 to 6 months prior to release. The extraordinary 2001 vintage wines have been released on a very selective basis. Each bottling is \$44.

**Skewis Floodgate Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 2001** In the past Parker has called this wine a copy of a top-flight grand cru Richebourg. The vineyard is at the far western end of the Anderson Valley on a steep southerly slope at 750 feet elevation. The soil is poor and the vines are not vigorous. Frequent summer fog and wind tempers the high afternoon temperatures. The fruit is a 50-50 blend of Pommard and Martini clones sourced from the same vine rows each year. 110 cases

**Skewis Montgomery Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 2001** Parker has likened this wine to a Morey-St-Denis from Gevrey Chamber-tin. This 12-year-old vineyard is in the Olivet Road area west of Santa Rosa. The frequent summer fog and poor clay soil are ideal growing conditions for Pinot Noir. The clone is unknown. An elegant style of Pinot. 195 cases

**Skewis Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 2001** From a small vineyard of 8 acres located high above Anderson Valley at an altitude of 1500 feet. The vines are stressed by the poor topsoil common to mountain top vineyards. The clones are 75% Wadenswil and 25% Pommard. 220 cases

**Skewis Bush Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 2001** This 2.5 acre vineyard is the newest vineyard acquisition. The grapes are Dijon 115 clone planted in 1998. Only 1.8 tons per acre in 2001. 220 cases

1-707-431-2160, [www.skewiswines.com](http://www.skewiswines.com)

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Pinot Noir is easily susceptible to "bottle shock". After bottling, Pinot Noir is often flat, simple, and insipid. 6 months after bottling, the condition reaches 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.

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## Ponzi Vineyards

Ponzi Vineyards was founded in 1970 by Dick and Nancy Ponzi as one of the first modern wineries in Oregon. Dick Ponzi had quit his job in California and bought property near Beaverton, Oregon, planting his vineyards himself in 1969. Over the years, Dick Ponzi made critically acclaimed wines that helped establish Oregon as a legitimate and promising region for winegrowing in general and Pinot Noir in particular.

In 1988, Dick Ponzi was recognized as one of the world's finest winemakers, one of only three Americans so distinguished by Robert Parker Jr.. Dick Ponzi's daughter, Luisa Ponzi, her older sister Maria, and her brother Michel grew up working in the vineyard and helping out in the family's small winery. Luisa was awarded a degree in Oenology and Viticulture from the CFPPA in Beaune, France and in 1994 Luisa took over winemaking duties from her father, though the two still work closely together. Luisa loves the Burgundy wines from Chambolle-Musigny with their silkiness, and Volnay with their pretty mid-palate and tries to obtain similar results with Ponzi Pinot Noirs.



The Pinot Noir program involves three wines: a Willamette Valley release, a Reserve wine, and vineyard designate Abetina Vineyard Pinot Noir. The Willamette Valley wine is soft, fruit forward, and made to drink on release. The Reserve is Ponzi's flagship wine. It is structurally bigger and needs several years to bypass its tightness and become a glorious Pinot with beautiful black fruits and spice.

**Ponzi Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2000** \$25 (pre-release \$21.25)

**Ponzi Pinot Noir Reserve 2000— 30th Anniversary** \$49 (pre-release \$41.65)

**Ponzi Pinot Noir Reserve 2001** \$49 (pre-release \$39.00)

Over the years I have had some memorable Ponzi Reserve Pinot Noirs. Two that stand out in my mind are the 1992 and the 1994 vintages. These wines were still drinking extremely well 5-6 years after release. I think the 2000 and the 2001 Reserve wines deserve serious attention and recommend cellaring for 5 years.

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***“In France you learn to trace a wine’s personality to the winemaker.” - Luisa Ponzi***

## Tohu Wines

Tohu Wines, Ltd, from New Zealand have become available in the United States by Davies and Co., a North Falmouth, Massachusetts importer who handle the wines nationally. The wines are very good, but what makes them notable is that the winery is owned by the Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand who arrived in New Zealand over eight centuries ago. They are said to share an anthropological relationship with the Polynesians. The 2000 Pinot Noir retails for \$22 a bottle and was both a hit and a curiosity at the Wines and Spirits convention in San Francisco last year. Tohu is owned by three Maori tribal groups, and is the only indigenously-produced New Zealand wine being exported to the United States. The Tohu vineyards are in Gisborne and Marlborough. Although New Zealand has been known for its Sauvignon Blanc, the potential for excellent Pinot Noir is being realized quickly. Pinot Noir production has been developing now for more than a decade and is beginning to emerge as a prominent player in the Kiwi wine industry. The temperate maritime climate can be ideal for growing Pinot Noir and Pinot Noir vine plantings are expected to increase by 85 percent over the next three years.

## Helen Turley Transforms Martinelli Winery

In 1895 Giuseppe Martinelli left the Minnesota coal mines and headed to California in search of a place to plant a vineyard and start a winery. The Green Valley and Russian River Valley areas reminded him of his Italian homeland so he stayed and procured a job grafting Zinfandel grapevines for a local farmer. Every Sunday, on his only day off, Giuseppe walked through the back hills along Green Valley Creek, searching for the perfect site to plant a Zinfandel vineyard. The Martinellis were to become grape growers for 100 years and in time became owners of over 2,000 acres of prime Sonoma vineyards. It wasn't until the late 1980's that the family produced its first wine.

When Helen Turley first started consulting for Martinelli in 1993, she changed the way of farming grapes for then patriarch Leno Martinelli. He was quickly transformed from a grapegrower into a winegrower the day she walked out into the vineyard and said, "You need to take off half of all this fruit." Leno smiled and chuckled until he realized she was very serious. He had to let go of the old way of farming where a bigger crop meant a bigger check. To him, tossing grapes on the ground was "money lying in the dirt." He finally did make a commitment to quality and the result has been Zinfandels, Chardonnays, Gewurztraminers, and Pinot Noirs that are considered some of the best in Sonoma, if not all of California.

The Martinellis now bottle several single vineyard Pinot Noirs as well as a Reserve from Sonoma County. The wines are highly sought after by collectors and appear frequently on auction websites. To join the mailing list to obtain these highly-allocated wines call 1-707-525-0570. You have been forewarned that you must purchase Chardonnays in package options to obtain the Pinot Noirs and Zins.

## Sonoma Restaurants Can Rival Napa

With the French Laundry, Le Toque, and other notable restaurants, the Napa Valley has ruled the culinary scene in Northern California wine country. However, Sonoma County is catching up— not surprising considering the bounty of fresh produce, seafood, poultry, and artisan breads and cheeses. The updated restaurant scene includes the following: **Applewood Inn & Restaurant** (Guerneville), **Farmhouse Inn & Restaurant** (Forestville), **The Girl & The Fig** (Petaluma), **La Paste** (Sonoma), **Manzanita** (Healdsburg), **Dry Creek Kitchen** (Healdsburg), **Underwood Bar and Bistro** (Graton), **Willi's Wine Bar** (Santa Rosa), and **Zazu** (Santa Rosa). Almost all of these restaurants feature primarily Sonoma wines reasonable priced. Most of them are still more laid back than their Napa counterparts and hark back to a more rustic past relished by locals and

## Malolactic Fermentation Important For Pinot Too

Malolactic fermentation is important for Pinot Noir as well as Chardonnay. It is well-known that malolactic fermentation gives Chardonnay its buttery character. But malolactic fermentation is equally important in the production of fine Pinot Noir:

1. It lowers total acidity
2. It adds complexity to the wine
3. It renders the wine microbiologically stable so it doesn't have to be filtered.



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2001 Girardin Red Burgundy Tasting  
Saturday Nov 15th, 2-4 PM at Wine Club  
in Santa Ana. Cost \$25 which includes a  
Burgundy tasting glass. RSVP with Greg  
at [gregkoslosky@thewineclub.com](mailto:gregkoslosky@thewineclub.com).  
Wines to be tasted include Vosne  
Romanee Suchots, Gevrey Chambertin  
Lavaux St. Jacques, Gevrey Chambertin  
Champeaux, Corton Renardes, Clos  
Vougeots, Bonnes Mares, Clos St. Denis,  
Clos de la Roche, Charmes Chambertin,  
Latricieres Chambertin, and  
Chambertin Clos de Beze.

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**Pinot Noir is one of the more difficult wines to ferment. This is partly due to the presence of 18 amino acids, which are naturally balanced in this varietal. Pinot Noir ferments violently, often boiling up out of its container, spreading the process out of control. Color retention is a major problem for the thin-skinned berries. Pinot is very prone to acidification and often loses promising aromas and flavors it can display through fermentation and aging as soon as it is bottled. Any wonder they call it the heartbreak grape?**

### **If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir**

  
PrinceofPinot.com

## **Spy Valley Wines, New Zealand**

Spy Valley is one of New Zealand's best family-run wine companies. Located in Marlborough, the winery won a gold medal for their Pinot Noir at the 17th Air New Zealand Wine Awards in Auckland recently. In a few years the winery has increased production from 5,000 cases of five varieties to 40,000 cases in 2003. The 2004 harvest will net 50,000 cases and output will climb to 120,000 cases by 2007! Actually the 2007 vintage is much anticipated because the winery can release their wines with an eye-catching label: "Spy Valley 007".

The company got its name from a United States satellite monitoring base on the same road as the winery in the Waihopai Valley. The name has caught on not just in New Zealand, Australia, Philippines, and the United Kingdom, but also the United States. The winery's motto is "under-stating and over-achieving."

A new winery, was completed last year, the largest winery in Marlborough. A young team is involved in management— the vineyard of 360 acres is managed by two 23-year-olds.

Attached to the winery is a luxury lodge, Timara Lodge, which is recognized as one of New Zealand's most luxurious and private lodges set in 25 acres of one of New Zealand's most beautiful gardens. There are very few wine companies that can offer luxury lodges with a winery attached, all under single family ownership.

