

**Pinot Noir is  
the Voice of  
God**

# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

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## Is Pinot Noir Doomed?

Global warming is a reality although some have argued against its existence. Considerable research indicates we are in the 3rd global warming period which extends over the last 2,000 years. The first or Roman warming period was in the 1st century, the second or Medieval warming period was in the 12th century, and the third and current Modern warming period began about 1850.

National Academy of Sciences studies show that California weather is getting hotter and drier and the Sierra Nevada snow pack is melting earlier. Heat waves are more common. Between 1951 and 1997, the annual average temperature in Napa and Sonoma has increased 1.130 degrees centigrade. In the past 30 years, worldwide temperatures in vineyards have increased an average of 1.3 degrees centigrade. Archives of historical harvest dates in France of Pinot Noir indicate warm periods similar to the 1990s in the 1380s, 1420s, 1530s, and 1630s-1680s. This indicates that individual decades have been warm but the current warming trend has been persistent for more than a century.

2003 was hotter than any year in France since data has been available. It was 5.86 degrees centigrade warmer than any other reference period. 10,000 French died from the heat wave in 2003. In Oregon, there were many vineyard temperatures over 100 degrees centigrade in 2003.

Global warming is thought to be due to the greenhouse effect resulting from greater solar intensity from ozone depletion and the buildup of greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide (from burning of fossil fuels), methane (from animal farming), and nitrous oxide (from fertilizer use). Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased 30 percent from preindustrial times.

The impact and existence of global warming remains controversial. For example, only 2% of carbon dioxide is manmade so it is unclear how greenhouse gases are at fault. Senator James Imhofe (R-Ok) has questioned the global warming trend and called it the "greatest hoax perpetuated on the American people."

What is the significance of global warming for grapevines? Studies in France have shown that climate plays the most significant role in wine quality. Gregory Jones reported his research recently to the Geological Society of America Meeting and found that most regions have experienced a growing season warming that has resulted in better overall vintages and wine quality. The warming has decreased the

Laura Lotspeich of Pheasant Hill Vineyard in Oregon referring to the gradual warming hitting Oregon the last few years, "If this keeps up much longer, we'll be growing nothing but coffee and bananas around here."

Increased carbon dioxide has stimulated vines to grow. So the effect to date has been beneficial. However, further increases in temperature may stress wine growth in some areas. High temperatures during ripening can cause early ripening and adversely affect the quality of the grapes. There are predictions that over the next half century in cool climate areas, average temperatures will rise 1.8-2.5 degrees centigrade, that carbon dioxide levels will double leading to 20% or greater increase in humidity and 30-50% reduction in soil moisture, and that rain will decrease to half of normal in summers and twice normal in winter. Also ultraviolet-B levels will be impacted significantly. An increase can inhibit powdery mildew, but can negatively impact grape flavors.

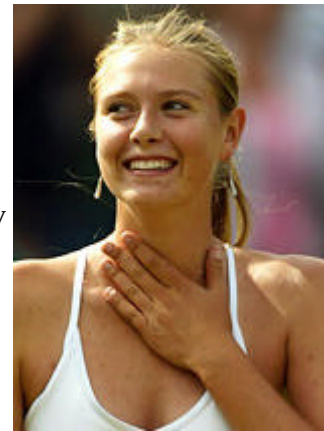
Global warming could push Sonoma's microclimate north resulting in the southern part (Russian River Valley) becoming too warm for Pinot Noir and some northern parts becoming too hot for any grape. Fortunately most of the vineyards in California are irrigated which may mitigate some of the warming problems. It will be good news for cold climates like Germany and British Columbia who can then plant Merlot. Sonoma may become known for its pineapple and bananas.

California has taken the initiative to control greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles. Many others are urging that we do more. Harry Pederson-Nedry (Chehalem Winery) commented recently in the AvalonWine.com newsletter: "Cassandrian warnings" Perhaps, but to pretend we don't have to react, by attacking the causes globally, and be prepared to respond to inevitable local changes will be foolhardy. Cool climate grape growing will always exist, because the wines are more refined and complex and food worthy. It's just that we'll get them from new places. And most people will have to satisfy themselves with Mediterranean varieties." Doomsday for Pinot Noir? Those cabophiles and syrahaficionados may get their revenge after all. Time to drink up.

## Tennis & Wine - Partners?

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* before the U.S. Open in New York, Belgian sommelier, William Wouters compared a 2001 Chateau Kirwan from Margaux to "Kim Clisters in a wine glass" and referred to another wine as "a Justine Henin" (both Kim and Justin are Belgian tennis players).

Neil E. Schleant responded to this analogy by writing a humorous piece called "Vintage Tennis" on the U.S. Open web site (usopen.org). He compared Roger Federer, inarguably the best tennis player in the world and maybe the best player ever, to a '61 Latour. He said that his talents were indicative of "a first growth Bordeaux, seductive, rich, fully mature, though may still develop even further." Rafael Nadal was compared to a Vega Sicilia Unico, Leyton Hewitt to a "corked" Aussie Shiraz, and Andy Roddick to a California Zinfandel. Maria Sharapova was like a California Chardonnay, "surprising powerful with great finesse and excellent length." The only nods for Pinot Noir were Venus Williams who was likened to a Carneros Pinot Noir and the French player, Richard Gasquet, who was similar to a French Burgundy.



Now for me personally, I think Maria Sharapova embodies Pinot Noir much more than that whore Chardonnay which offers itself for sale at any price. While Maria has impeccable Russian breeding, she is in reality a California sophisticated seductress with the skirt too short, lips too full and eyelashes gently batting in the breeze. Like Pinot Noir, she is fickle, temperamental and easy to covet but hard to own. She is racy, flashy, glamorous and yet refined with the breeding, sophistication, and the suavity of a fine Burgundy. Tennis is all about thriving on the edge, succeeding at break point when the match is on the line. And Pinot Noir, more than any other grape, thrives when it lives on the edge.

## MacPhail Pinot Noir: Get on the Grape Wagon

The MacPhail Family first immigrated from Scotland to Prince Edward Island in eastern Canada. In the 1880s, a few family members moved on and settled in Marin County in Northern California. Here they founded the area's first livery stable, sold general merchandise and delivered concrete to construction sites. The MacPhails helped pour the pilings for the Golden Gate Bridge and the Waldo Tunnel leading Hwy 101 into Sausalito. James MacPhail (4th generation) was raised on a dairy farm in western Sonoma County and as a youngster was actively involved in his family's businesses. He became an accomplished classical pianist and bagpiper and a dedicated sportsman. In 1983 he was the youngest person to swim the Golden Gate and today is a nationally ranked Masters swimmer.

In the mid 1990s, James became interested in winemaking. He left the family business, McPhail's Appliances in San Rafael and Santa Rosa and began working with wineries and growers in Sonoma County. He found that winemaking allowed him to express his artistic talents and he acquired the experience to found his own wine company in 1998, MacPhail Family Wines. He selected a number of growers in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties who shared his passion for sustainable grape farming. He also planted a one acre Pinot Noir vineyard in the Anderson Valley (Frattey Shams Vineyard - boontling word for grapevine) in 1999 with his good friend Ron Verdier. His first Pinot Noir, the 2002 MacPhail Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, was highly regarded and is now sold out. Recently he released three Pinot Noirs from the 2003 vintage. Production was 566 cases in 2003 (expected production in 2004 will be 1875 cases).

*"Wine is art with a splash of science"*

*Winemaker*

*James MacPhail*

**2003 MacPhail Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.5% alc., 196 cases, \$40, sold out at winery). The grapes were sourced from Vin Noy Vineyard and Vera-Gold Vineyard planted to Dijon clones 115, 667, and 777, and 2A (Wadenswil). Yields were less than 1 ton per acre. Winemaking is natural, grapes are 100% destemmed, 5-7 day cold maceration, native yeast fermentations and native malolactic fermentation in barrel, aged 10 months in 100% French oak, 65% new. A dark, chunky Pinot Noir with attractive Oriental spice and cherry kirsch aromas. New World in style (trans: big & sappy), this seductive drink has a touch of alcohol on the nose and finish initially that resolves over an hour or so. Then the wine blossoms with toasty chocolate chip and black cherry flavors leading to a smooth, long and soft finish. This is an adult-only wine that needs air time.

**2003 MacPhail Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.5% alc., 120 cases, \$40). Grapes are Dijon 115 clone farmed by this legendary Sonoma farming family. The wine offers seductive perfumed aromas of dried cherries and herbs. The flavors are a bit exotic for Pinot Noir with interesting plum and bittersweet chocolate tones. The mouth feel is velveteen.

**2003 MacPhail Toulouse Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (14.5% alc., 312 cases, \$35). This vineyard is located just outside the town of Philo and is meticulously farmed by Vern and Maxine Boltz. Much of the harvest is sent to Pacific Echo for sparkling wine, but MacPhail receives some Dijon 115, 667, and 777 and Wadenswil grapes. It is very interesting to contrast this wine with the above two. It is lighter in body, possesses more bright acidity, and exhibits less influence from alcohol. The cherry and cola flavors have a mineral edge giving it an Old World character. With food (grilled salmon) this wine provides a lavish experience.



The lineup is for sale on the website at [www.grapewagon.com](http://www.grapewagon.com) or [RootsCellar.com](http://RootsCellar.com). MacPhail Family Wines is located in Healdsburg (Beaune in USA), phone 707-433-4780,

## Arista Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

Surprise! Another family-owned producer of premium quality boutique Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley. It seems that a week doesn't go by that I haven't heard of a new label in this region.

Founded in 2002, Arista Winery is a newambitious Pinot project from John Copeland, a retired military pilot who also worked in the eye care field and for Kendall Jackson before joining forces with his brother-in-law, Al McWilliams, a prominent Texas orthodontist. They acquired vineyards in northern Sonoma County near Cloverdale and in the Russian River Valley. The Arista Estate is being developed on the benchlands of Westside Road where estate vineyards are being planted and a winery with a public tasting room is being established. The winemaker is Daniel Moore, a former Pinot Noir and Chardonnay winemaker at Lynmar and currently partnering with Jeff Morgan to make Solo Rosa rosé wine.

The 2002 Arista Longbow and Harper's Rest Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs were previously reviewed (Vol 4, Issue 37). The 2003 vintage offers 6 Pinot Noirs

### 2003 Arista Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$26)

**2003 Arista Longbow Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$35). This is a winemaker's selection of special barrels and is named in honor of Sir John Copeland who was knighted by King Edward III of England in 1346. The idea is that Copeland was an excellent archer and this Copeland wine "hits the bull's eye."

**2003 Arista Harper's Rest Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.2% alc., \$35). Reuben Harper was a Russian River Valley pioneer who worked the land where the Arista Estate stands today. He passed away in 1857 and a stately Bay Laurel tree on the 20-acre estate marks his resting place. This offering pulls you in with a hi-tone cherry cola nose. The flavors duplicate the sensuous aromas. Light on its feet, it is soft and well-balanced. A very satisfying drink. Tres Pinot.

**2003 Mononi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.2% alc., \$45). Paul and Amy Mononi's estate vineyard lies in the heart of the Russian River Valley. Clones are 113, 114, and 115. A New World extracted style of Pinot Noir. Dark purple robe. The nose features plenty of smoke and oak with cranberry and dried cherry notes. The tannins are fine and the wine goes down easy. Enjoyable but not terribly notable. This wine is kind of like a blind date who looks fine and has a good personality, but doesn't light your fire and one you want to take home early.

**2003 Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.2% alc., \$45) Joe and Mary Toboni own a 15-acre Pinot Noir vineyard near the intersection of Olivet Lane and River Road. A rich, extracted Pinot that would appeal to Santa Lucia Highland pinoaficionados.

### 2003 Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$45),

The wines are available in the retail market (ie winex.com) and on the winery's website at [www.aristawinery.com](http://www.aristawinery.com).



