

**Great Pinot
Noir is a
Love Letter**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotaficionados

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Cardwell Hill Cellars: Oregon Pinot, OC Roots

When most people think of Orange County, California ("The OC"), they imagine long, white sandy beaches, tanned surfer dudes, and Balboa bars - not wine. However, there are actually three wineries now in Orange County (Hamilton Oaks Vineyard, Laguna Canyon Winery, and Newport Beach Vineyard & Winery). Also, there are quite a few winery owners and winemakers who still reside in the OC (Greg Linn of Ambullneo, Jeffrey Fink of Tantara, and Greg Saunders of White Rose Vineyards are three well-known vintners that come to mind).

Cardwell Hill Cellars of Philomath, Oregon, is owned by Dan and Nancy Chapel, residents of North Tustin in Orange County since 1976. Dan was a very successful engineer at Fluor Corporation and found winegrowing to be a challenging outlet for his creative juices after he retired. A few years ago, the Chapels purchased a neglected vineyard in a picturesque location in Southern Oregon near Corvallis. He has since transformed the property into a magnificent estate with a large gorgeous home, a winery, and modern vineyards. He utilized his engineering skills to design the gravity-flow winery (photo, right) and cleverly extended the height of the large basement under his home (photo, left) so that he could store and age his wine. He likes to say that he and Nancy "literally sleep on our wine."

Pinot Gris (and Pinot Blanc) are genetically identical to Pinot Noir. They probably arose as spontaneous field mutations from Pinot Noir vines. The French have observed white Pinot Noir vines emerge among their red Pinot Noir vines indicating Pinot Noir's proclivity to mutate.



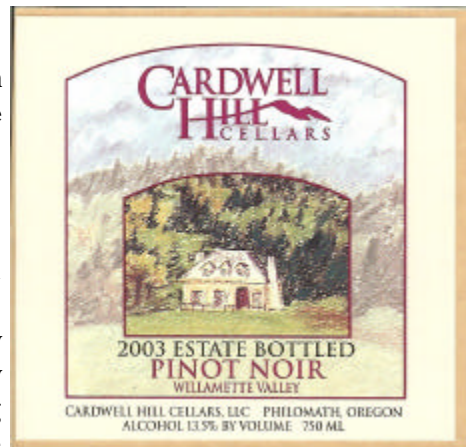
The estate bottled wines from Cardwell Hill are sourced from 33 acres of Pinot Noir and 3 acres of Pinot Gris. The original Monet Vineyard was planted in 1984 with the Wadenswil clone. To that vineyard, they added Pommard and Dijon 115 and 777 clones. In 2003, they purchased additional acreage, christened Degas Vineyard, and planted it to Wadenswil and Dijon 115 clones of Pinot Noir, and Pinot Gris. The vineyards are planted on the south slope of Cardwell Hill where subterranean water provides a natural irrigation system. Established vines are dry farmed as the subterranean moisture provides just the right amount of water during the warm summer months. Vineyard management is under the direction of consultant Norbert Feibig who has been farming grapes in Oregon for over 25 years.

Fortunately for the Chapels, they were able to retain the winemaking expertise of Jim Kakacek, a U.C. Davis graduate who also crafts excellent Pinot Noirs at nearby Van Duzer Vineyards. Winemaking here is traditional with fermentation in 2.5 ton open-top stainless steel tanks, cold soak, manual punch-down, both free run and press wines flow via gravity to the barrel room, and the wines are aged for approximately 10 months in a combination of new Seguin Moreau and slightly used Seguin Moreau and Francois Freres barrels. One racking is done to control the amount of oak flavors in the wine. An excellent Pinot Gris is also made here. Whole cluster pressing is followed by fermentation in all stainless steel equipment and cold stabilization before bottling. All wines are estate bottled.

2005 Cardwell Hill Cellars Pinot Noir Rosé 12.5% alc., 92 cases, \$15. This wine is fermented in stainless steel after being pressed off the must. The light red color is very attractive. Made in an off-dry style, it has appealing strawberry and watermelon flavors. Very brisk and clean.

2003 Cardwell Hill Cellars Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 565 cases, \$20. All four clones from the estate vineyards were used in this wine. From a warm vintage, this Pinot is full-bodied, rich with dark fruits, and offers some notes of leather and oak. The wine finishes with a tangy acidic edge.

2004 Cardwell Hill Cellars Pinot Noir 972 cases, \$20. Again, both old and new plantings were used in this wine. The grapes were harvested at a Brix of 22.5-23.5 and this produced a much more elegant wine than the 2003 vintage. The aromatics feature dark fruits and violets. Both red and dark fruits are nicely composed on the palate. The structure is soft with powdery tannins and the very full mouth feel is silky. The finish is striking with a "peacock tail" that lingers until the next sip. A Pinot love letter.



Everything is in place here for this to be a very successful Pinot Noir producer: expert vineyard management and winemaking and the passion to produce an ultra-premium estate product. The excellence of the current lineup of wines is clearly evident. A bonus is the reasonable prices that adds to their appeal.

Cardwell Hill Cellars is located at 24241 Cardwell Hill Drive, Philomath, Oregon 97370 (a short distance from Scenic Drive - Kings Valley Hwy, #223). The website is www.cardwellhillwine.com, the phone is 541-929-WINE. The tasting room is open from early May through Thanksgiving weekend from 12:00 - 6:00 and tours are available year-round by appointment. Dan's local phone number in Orange County is 714-730-0608.

Anne Amie Vineyards

Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr. is a prominent and respected business mogul in Oregon who, as President of the R.B. Pamplin Corporation, founded the Portland Tribune newspaper, Columbia Empire Farms (a large berry and hazelnut producer in Yamhill County), Your NorthWest retail stores, and Anne Amie (on-ah-me) Vineyards. In 1999, he purchased Chateau Benoit Winery and since then the quality has risen very rapidly. He brought together a dedicated team with the talent and experience to craft world-class Pinot Noir and other varietals. The 2002 vintage Pinot Noir was the top rated Pinot Noir in Oregon according to the *Northwest Wine Press*. The name, Anne Amie, is in honor of Dr. Pamplin's two daughters.

Winemaker Scott Huffman has been a key to the success here. He grew up in Yamhill County and learned both winemaking and vineyard management. He was hired by Fred Benoit, founder of Chateau Benoit, as an assistant winemaker. When Dr. Pamplin purchased the property, he retained Scott and gave him the resources to transform the winemaking and vineyards to produce terroir-driven wines of high quality. Success has arrived quickly as evidenced by the comments of Steve Kolpan, professor of wine studies at the Culinary Institute of America. He recently stated that "The Anne Amie label is one of the best New World Pinot Noir wines that I have ever tasted," and cited it as an example of "the all-too-rare terroir-driven wine."

The Pinot Noir portfolio consists of the following wines: Cuvée A (a fruit-forward, easy-drinking wine), Cuvée A Midnight Saignée Pinot Noir Rosé, Anne Amie Vineyards Pinot Noir Winemaker's Selection (a blend from several vineyards), and Anne Amie Vineyards Pinot Noir Vineyard Designates (small lots from the finest vineyards which vary from vintage to vintage and represent "terroir" wines, usually less than 200 cases each, up to six different vineyards). There is also a white wine portfolio and warmer-weather varietals from Southern Oregon.

The winery's beautiful tasting room is pictured below on a sunny day. 2006 has been a record year for rain in Oregon. The standing joke is, "In Oregon, what do you call a clear day after two days of rain." Answer: "Monday."

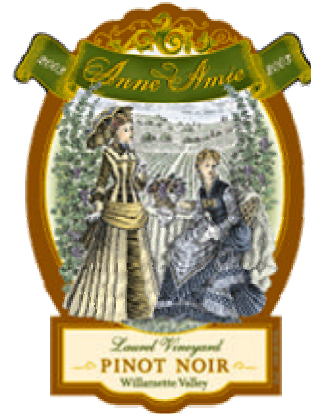


2004 Cuvée A Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc.. A light, fruity Pinot Noir with a welcoming nose of dark fruits and toasty oak. The perfect back porch sippin Pinot. Nothing to expend your critical facilities on, but when you are thirsty, who wants to?



2002 Anne Amie Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$40. This is a superb wine. The nose is complex with plum, exotic wood, and violets. Very vibrant and succulent fruit and a suave finish with racy acidity. Harmonious and balanced. A prime-time Pinot from the 2002 vintage in Oregon.

2003 Anne Amie Deux Vert Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. This vineyard is owned by Dee and George Hillberry and is located due east of the winery. The soils are dark rust-colored volcanic and the vines produce very age-worthy Pinots. This wine is dark ruby in color and is loaded with sweet black cherry, cranberry, dark red raspberry, and licorice aromas and flavors. It is densely-packed, powerful, and firm, yet the texture is soothing. The finish has substantial tannins which are dry and a touch bitter now. Give this one a few years in the cellar to mellow.



The Anne Amie tasting room is open daily from 10-5 at 6580 NE Mineral Springs Rd, Carlton 97111. Wines may be ordered on the website at www.anneamie.com or by phone at 503-864-2991, but the best place to enjoy the wines is at the tasting room (see view of the Pacific Coast Mountain Range below). An excellent blog at anneamie.typepad.com is updated monthly.



2006 Pinot Noir Summit Results

The results of the 4th Annual Pinot Noir Summit held on March 11, 2006 in San Francisco have been posted on the Affairs of the Vine website, www.affairsofthevine.com. Through a series of tastings organized by Barbara Drady of Affairs of the Vine, and attended by a professional tasting panel made up of 30 judges, 40 Pinot Noirs were chosen out of over 230 wines submitted from North America, New Zealand, and Australia. The judges comments were carefully recorded to see if there were gender differences among the judges with regard to the style of Pinot Noir that they preferred.

At the Shootout, the final 40 Pinot Noirs were judged blind by 150 consumers attending the event. The judge's panel results and the consumer's preferences were compared and the top wines received awards.

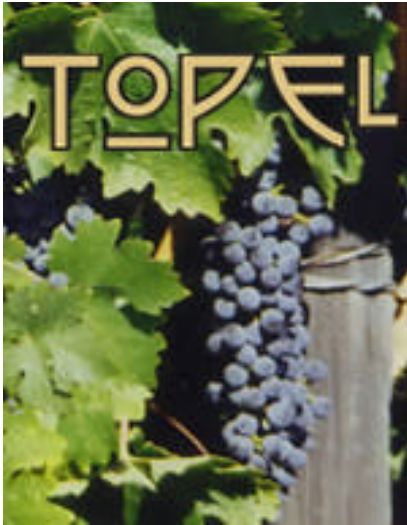
The judge's panel TOP wine was the **2004 Laetitia Vineyards & Winery Estate Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir**. This is an incredible value with the wine selling for \$20 retail. My notes at the blind tasting read, "captivating nose of ripe cherries and Oriental spices. Really nice balance. The finish goes on and on and on." 5000 cases made. (I also liked the **2003 Laetitia Vineyards & Winery La Colline Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir** selling for \$50, 240 cases made). Tied for second place were the **2004 Buena Vista Los Carneros Ramal Vineyard Dijon Clones Pinot Noir** (\$38, 450 cases), the **2004 Mac Phail Family Wines Pratt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$56, 235 cases), and the **2003 Row Eleven Wine Company Solomon Hills Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** (\$49, 144 cases). Tied for third place were the **2003 Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$60, 156 cases), the **2003 Keller Estate La Cruz Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$30, 2200 cases), and the **2004 Lost Canyon Winery Saralees Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$38, 340 cases).

The male consumer's TOP choice was the **2004 Vision Cellars Sonoma County Pinot Noir** (\$28, 638 cases), and the female consumer's TOP choice was the **2003 Carneros della Notte Los Carneros Pinot Noir** (\$48, 400 cases). The men ranked the Carneros della Notte #35 out of 40 - go figure!

Summarizing the results, Barbara Drady found that there was not a significant difference in scores or impressions among the panel of male and female judges. Maybe the women leaned more toward finesse over structure but this was far from proven. However, at the Pinot Noir Summit, there was a definite gender split. Men and women did not agree with each other nor did they concur with the results of the panel. For example, the 2004 Laetitia Vineyards & Winery Estate Pinot Noir, which was the judging panel's #1 wine, was placed #19 out of 40 by the men consumers, and #20 out of 40 by the women consumers! It all goes to prove again that taste is very personal and imprecise and varies considerably from person to person. As Dr. Jamie Goode said, writing in *The World of Fine Wine*, 2005, "While there is such a thing as expertise in wine tasting, we should taste humbly and not seek to champion a uniform, one-size-fits-all model of wine assessment." Or as the Prince (below at the pre-Summit blind tasting) preaches, "If you can't have the Pinot you love, love the Pinot you are with."



Topel: Unique Pinot Noir from a Cabernet Lover



Not too long ago I received an e-mail from Jane Young of Labrador Communcations asking me if I would like to taste a Pinot Noir from Topel Winery. & Vineyards. Now Topel is not on my radar because it is primarily a Cabernet Sauvignon producer. However, Jane said the 2002 Pinot Noir was named Wine of the Week by the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* and I was intrigued.

Mark Topel (a Russian-Jewish name pronounced "Toe-pell") is a successful criminal defense attorney and his wife, Donnis, is a former pastry chef who once owned a well-known Berkeley dance studio. The story goes that he was in Napa on legal work and came across an old 160-acre sheep ranch at 1400 feet on the east side of Duncan Peak. Looking down into Hopland, it is in the most southeast corner of Mendocino County. Mark was intrigued because grapes had been grown here in the 1800s and he personally preferred the taste of mountain-grown red wines. A couple of knowledgeable wine people, Joel Peterson and Stu Smith saw the property and told him it was

ideal for growing Cabernet Sauvignon, although there was no other vineyards on the mountain. That was all it took.

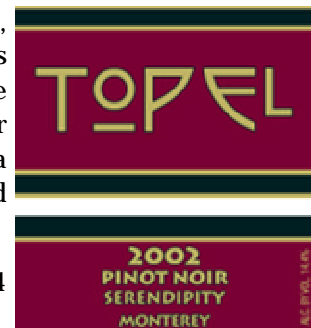
In 1989 he began the rigors of clearing the land and planting a vineyard with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, and then Syrah. Today he has 32 acres of vineyards on a hillside which he farms organically. Mark and Donnis learned their winemaking from enology courses at U.C. Davis and the assistance of winemaker Nancy Walker. By 2000, Mark was doing most of the winemaking chores and producing a commercial quantity of attractive wine.

Mark released a Pinot Noir from the 2001 and 2002 vintage made from Monterey County grapes. He field crushed the grapes from hillside vineyards in northern Monterey County. The clones were a combination of Pommard, 667, 777, and 115 on 110R rootstock. Uniquely, the wine was aged for 32 months before release - 2months in new Francoise Freres barrels, then 2 years in neutral French oak., then 6 months in the bottle.

2002 Topel Serendipity Vineyard Monterey County Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$22.50, 405 cases) A very unique and interesting Pinot Noir. The nose is layered with cherries, spices (notably cardamom), and a little sauvage. The wine tastes terrific but is unlike any other California Pinot Noir I have ever had. It really stumped me when I tried to pin down the flavors but there was a load of stylish, complex spices here. This Pinot is nicely weighted and balanced, and a kick to drink.

No 2003 Pinot Noir was produced due to inadequate grape supply, but a 2004 Pinot Noir is slated to be released this summer.

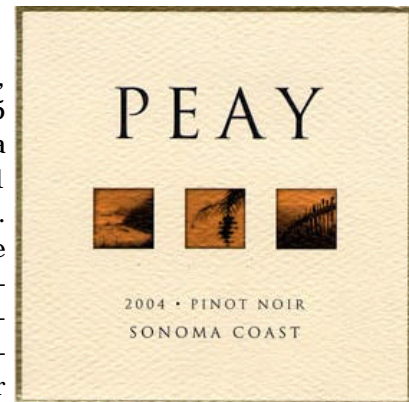
Wines may be ordered from the website at www.topelwines.com.



Peay Vineyards Latest Pinot Noir Rocks

Peay Vineyards is located on the “true” Sonoma Coast, 4 miles from the Pacific Ocean at Sea Ranch, California. On the 48 acre hilltop vineyard, they grow 33 acres of Pinot Noir, as well as some Chardonnay, Viognier, Roussanne and Marsanne. Peay is a family affair with Nick Peay, a U.C. Davis trained and veteran Santa Cruz Mountains winemaker, acting as the vineyard manager and his wife, Vanessa Wong, formerly of Peter Michael Winery, crafting the wines. Nick’s brother, Andy, runs the business side of the operation. They started here from scratch and produced their first wines in 2001. A new winery is being constructed on the property (you can follow its evolution on the web site, www.peayvineyards.com). Currently the wines are made in Cloverdale, quite a commute.

2004 Peay Vineyards Estate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 575 cases, \$48. This wine is a blend of 7th leaf selections/clones of 115 (29%), Pommard (29%), 667 (20%), 777 (12%), Swan (8%), and Calera (2%). Yields were low - 2 tons per acre. The wine was aged for 11 months in 42% new French oak. The wine has a beautiful garnet color. Aromatics are addicting with red berries, graham, and mocha. The succulent fruit flavors are dominated by cherries, spice and everything nice. There is a certain earthiness as well. The balance is perfect and the finish is ridiculously long. This is fruit-driven and not oak-driven. Really good now, give this wine a few more years in the cellar and it will rock you.



The Chardonnay here is not to be overlooked. Winegrower Nick Peay says that he showed up for the 1993 harvest at Newton Vineyards, and on the first day winemaker John Kongsgaard assigned him the role of “Chardonnay boy.” He learned a lot from Kongsgaard, including patience. He writes, “Following the latest fashion and trend is not a conducive environment for learning about the finest Chardonnay selection for your vineyard site. We may just discover that the best clone for our site comes from old material that has been passed around the state for a long time. As with most things, often a combination of the wisdom from previous generations combined with the advances of the new result in the ultimate expression.” Winemaker Vanessa Wong learned at the “House of Chardonnay,” Peter Michael Winery. The Chardonnay she crafts at Peay Vineyards is not, as she exclaims, “another flabby, oaky, butter Chardonnay, but rather one that people can really enjoy made from our unique coastal grapes.” She likes to say that the Chardonnay grown here is very distinctive with good acidity and with essence and purity. Now I am not a Chardonnay lover, but I do enjoy the Peay style and always purchase some bottles for those occasions where only a Chardonnay will do (like the Crab and Scallop Stew in a Golden Puff Pastry described in their most recent newsletter).



The more you taste the wines from here and the more you read the Peay Vineyards newsletters full of useful information and insight, you quickly become a fan. It is no coincidence that many of our nation’s top restaurants feature Peay Vineyards wines. Most of the wine is sold through a mailing list. The website is www.peayvineyards.com.

Row Eleven Wine Co.: Reyes Knows Pinot

San Rafael-based Row Eleven Wine Company was founded by 30-year wine business veteran, Richard de los Reyes along with partner Bradley W. Miller. The name, Row Eleven, reflects the company's knowledge of vineyards. As de los Reyes (Ricardo D) was seeking out new grape sources for his venture and searching every row in the vineyards for the best grapes, he was amused to find that he preferred the eleventh row in each of his favorite vineyards: Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills in the Santa Maria Valley, as well as the Sanchetti Ranch in the Russian River Valley.

Row Eleven Wine Company is devoted to Pinot Noir (the company's three other brands are dedicated to other varietals: Pinot Gris from Oregon for The Civello, Cabernet Sauvignon for Stratton Lummis, and Syrah for RDLR - Rich Dark Luscious Red). Row Eleven's Pinot Noir grapes are processed at eight established winery facilities adjacent to vineyards in California (what is termed a Multi-Alternating Proprietor or MAP). The resulting reduced overhead allows Ricardo D to pass on the savings to consumers (no bottle sells for more than \$40). Currently they are in the permit process for a winery in Santa Barbara where they can crush their Pinot Noir. Current production is limited to 3,000 cases per brand each year.

I like the phrase that Ricardo D puts on the back labels of his wines: "To lovers of this wine, I am always available."

2003 Row Eleven Wine Company Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 1200 cases, \$30. This Pinot is made from predominantly Pommard clone (and a little Dijon clones) from the Bien Nacido Vineyard and Solomon Hills Vineyard in Santa Maria. Aged in primarily 3-5 year-old Remond and Francois Freres oak barrels. The nose is thick with rich oak and pepper. The flavors feature dark cherries, toasted oak, and dark chocolate. The mouth feel is full and opulent. The finish slightly bitter with vibrant acidity. Great with grilled ahi tuna burgers with onion (this wine loves smoke).

2003 Row Eleven Wine Company Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 690 cases, \$34. A mixture of Martini, Pommard and Dijon clones. Aged in 3-5 year-old mixed French barrels. A really terrific Pinot. The nose offers a lot of cherries, plenty of baking spice, and a touch of pepper. The flavors carry over the same theme, and the wine finishes with tangy acid and enough spice to start a bakery. Balanced, elegant, and perky.

2003 Row Eleven Wine Company Solomon Hills Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 144 cases, \$39. One of the top five wines at the 2006 Pinot Noir Shootout. I briefly tasted this wine blind at the Shootout and my notes say: Burlly nose with plenty of toasted oak. A Caliesque style with plenty of oak and substantial tannins. The finish is long and a touch vegetal.

For more information, contact Wagstaff Worldwide at 323-871-1151 or the headquarters at 135 3rd St, Ste 100, San Rafael, CA 94901 (phone 415-259-2770). The wines can be purchased at www.row11.com.



Zafferano Esperienze Wine Glasses

These new wine glasses from glassmaker Luigi Bormioli in Parma, Italy, are designed with concentric ripples at their base of the bowl. This allows an expanded surface contact with the wine. When the wine is swirled in the glass, more aromas are released than in an ordinary glass. In fact, it is claimed that this design brings out more of the wine's aromas even if the glass is not swirled. So whether you swirl or not, you still supposedly end up with much more layers of aroma. Carrying this even further, *The Rosengarten Report*, did a casual testing of the glasses and felt that wine also tasted better out of the Esperienze glasses. I have not tested these glasses and I am not endorsing them. The design is intriguing, but whether the glasses truly have a significant bearing on aromas and taste remains to be proven.

Esperienze glasses come in 15 different shapes for different types of drinks, from dessert wines to aged reds. A decanter is also available. The glasses are not widely distributed yet but will be available in wine stores soon. Yahoo.com offers 3 styles for \$60. Visit the website, www.zafferanoitalia.com for viewing of the entire lineup of stem glasses.



Riedel Amadeo Lyra Decanter

The Amadeo collection is one of the newest for Riedel and celebrates the 250th anniversary of this crystal glass ware company. The Amadeo name also commemorates the fact that this is also Mozart's 250th anniversary year. The striking decanter takes its name from its unique shape. It holds 59 oz and retails for \$300. A great father's day gift.

Andy McConnell has written an entire book on decanters - the result of seven years of research - *The Decanter: An Illustrated History of Glass from 1650*. He is puzzled by the fall from grace of the practice of decanting. He says "The decanter's fall from grace is a strange phenomenon. Just a generation ago, it was regarded in almost every civilized home as essential to the serving of wine. It was employed for several good reasons: to separate the palatable wine from any sediment, to enable the remainder to breathe and to enhance the ambience of the dining experience." Graham Cooley, a scientist who loves wine, says there is another benefit of decanting. "Bottled wines often contain radicals that alter their taste and that are neutralized by pouring into a dry decanter. This act has the effect of broadening and deepening the wines' flavor, especially when combined with the benefits of exposing the wine to air within the broad body of the decanter." For the full story read Andy McConnell's article, 'Giving Glass Its Due,' in *The World of Fine Wine*, Issue 9, 2005.




PrinceofPinot.com

The PinotFile website now contains a complete listing and details of all of the Pinot Noir festivals in the world.

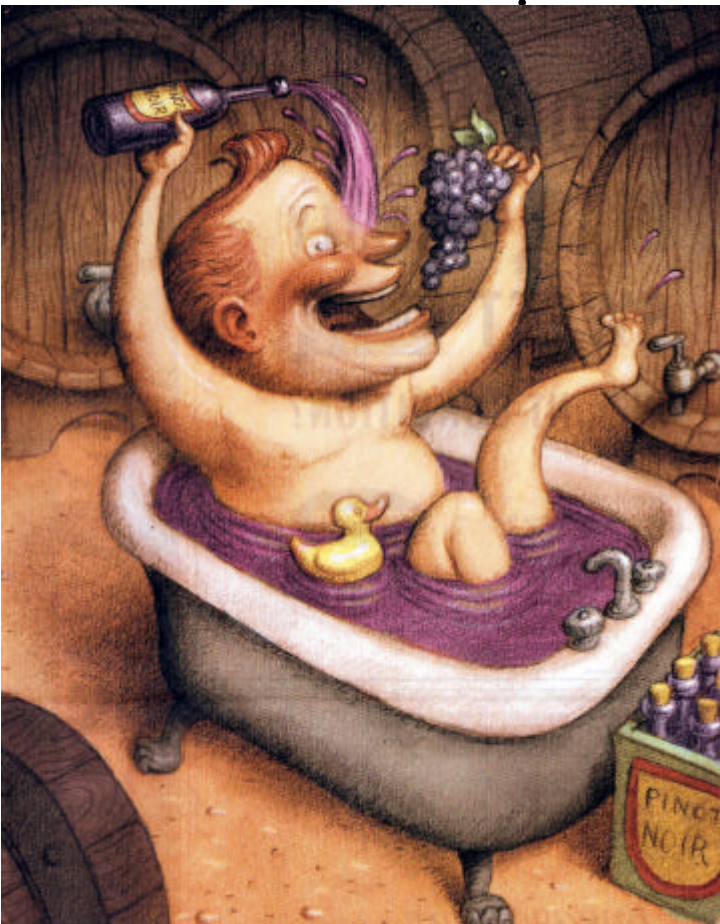
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Explosion in Pinot Noir Sales

According to Wine Business Monthly, there has been a 174% increase in case volume sales of Pinot Noir since September 2003 and an 196% dollar sales increase. Pinot Noir now claims 2.1% of the case volume and 3.9% of the dollar sales (compared to 2/04 when the figures were 1.3% and 2.4%). Of the top 10 varietals, Pinot Noir has had the largest increase in dollar sales market share and 3rd largest growth in case volume market share.

So what's the problem? Pinot Noir sales cannot continue to grow at this pace because there simply is not enough supply of the finicky grape to justify the demand.



The Prince has often been accused of being extravagant and obsessed with Pinot Noir. He has been known to take baths in tubs filled with 100 bottles of Pinot Noir. Many Pinot enthusiasts have been purple with envy and have tried to discredit him. Recently, some jealous friends secretly drained his bathtub after his ceremonious Pinot Noir bath and to their delight, found that it took 101 bottles to empty the tub.