

The Russian River Valley and River are named for Russian explorers who settled at Fort Ross, just north of Jenner where the Russian River empties into the Pacific Ocean. According to Steve Heimoff, writing in *A Wine Journey Along the Russian River*, the Russians landed on the Sonoma Coast at a site populated by a Pomo Indian colony that the natives had named Metini. The Russians worked out a deal with the Indians to settle at Metini and they named their new village Rossiya, after the name historically given to their Russian homeland. It was years later before it became known as Fort Ross. The Pomo Indians were the original inhabitants of the Sonoma Coast and the Russian River Valley and had named the Russian River Shabakai or “long snake,” for its many twists and turns. The Russians adopted their own name for the River, Slavianka or “pretty Russian girl.” By 1867, the Russians had left North America entirely, leaving behind the anglicized names Russian River Valley and Russian River as their legacy.

The defining feature of the Russian River Valley is a single three-letter word: fog. Fog from the Pacific Ocean is the most important single influence on viticulture here and it defines the boundaries of the Russian River Valley appellation which was established in 1983. The fog enters the Valley during the growing season from the southwest through the Petaluma Wind Gap between Pt Reyes and Bodega Bay, with a smaller incursion traveling inward along the Russian River from its origins at Jenner on the Sonoma Coast. Plenty of daytime warmth (the Russian River Valley is a Region III on the University of California Davis scale) gives way to cool nights and mornings caused by the fog that pours in through the Gap. The result is slowed ripening and extended hang time for the grapes. The winegrowers here like to say that they turn fog into Pinot Noir.

There are many varietals that thrive in the diverse microclimates of the Russian River Valley. It was the so-called “field blends” of varietals such as Grenache, Mourvèdre, Carignane, Petite Sirah, Syrah and Alicante Bouschet along with Zinfandel that the Italian Americans grew so successfully and popularized here. Some of these Italian-American immigrants’ families, such as Seghesio, Rochioli, Pedroncelli, and Pellegrini, are still making wine in the Russian River Valley. With time, the region has become the chosen one for growing the Burgundian varietals, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

The Russian River is 105 miles in length, beginning its journey in the coastal mountains in the north near the town of Willits in Mendocino County, and winding south through the Alexander Valley before reaching the Russian River Valley. Just below the town of Healdsburg, the River takes a turn to head west toward the Pacific Ocean. The surrounding area here is the so-called Middle Reach of the Valley, the sweet spot and birthplace of modern Pinot Noir viticulture in the Valley.

The first to plant Pinot Noir along Westside Road in the Middle Reach was Steve and Helen Bacigalupi in 1964 (Steve Heimoff notes that Korbel has planted Pinot Noir as far back as the 1950s, but this was a few miles west where Westside Road ends at River Road near Guerneville). In 1968, shortly after his father passed away, Joe Rochioli, Jr. (pictured right) in deference to his father’s wishes planted Pinot Noir on Westside Road along the banks of the Russian River. This became the now infamous East Block of Pinot Noir. West Block followed a year later. In 1973, Davis Bynum, a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter, built the first winery on Westside Road and he produced Pinot Noir from



Joe Rochioli Jr.’s first crop. The **1973 Davis Bynum Rochioli Vineyard Pinot Noir** was the first Russian River Valley vineyard-designated wine. The following year, Gary Farrell, who had majored in political science at Sonoma State University, decided to become a winemaker and took a job at Davis

Bynum. In 1982, Gary Farrell started his own label, Gary Farrell Wines, crafting Pinot Noir from Rochioli grapes vinified at Davis Bynum. He continued as winemaker for Davis Bynum until 2000. Also in 1982, Joe Rochioli Jr. and his son Tom started the Rochioli label. The first wines were made by Farrell at Davis Bynum. By 1985, Tom had quit his job in the banking business and joined his father as the winemaker. Early on Gary Farrell continued as a consultant and assisted in the planning and construction of the Rochioli winery.

Gary Farrell would often hand-deliver his wines to customers in the Valley, one of whom was Ed Selyem, who was the wine buyer for Speer's Market in Forestville. In a sfgate.com article dated 8/22/06 written by Linda Murphy, Gary Farrell was reported as saying, "Their (Ed Selyem and Burt Williams) entry into the business caught me by surprise. Ed would ask me about the Rochioli vineyards, about winemaking, and I gave him the recipe. It never occurred to me what he was up to until Joe Rochioli told me that he'd sold grapes to Williams Selyem."

The now legendary Williams Selyem Winery was the original Russian River Valley garage winery. Burt Williams hailed from Sebastopol, worked as a proofreader for the San Francisco Newspaper Agency and made wine at home. Ed Selyem fashioned beer and fruit wine in his garage in Forestville. Together they began making wine from Sonoma Zinfandel grapes for their own use in 1979. Their first commercial winery was based in a rented garage on River Road in Fulton beginning in 1981 (photo right shows a recent photo of the garage).



The original name of their winery was Hacienda del Rio, a name Ed used on his first home crafted wines. The photo below left shows the 1980 Hacienda del Rio label. This wine was produced in a Forestville garage by Ed and Burt for friends and family and was not released commercially. The first three commercial Pinot Noirs, 1981-1983, were made at Russian River Vineyards in Forestville and bottled under the Hacienda del Rio name. The wines were an instant success and Burgundy lovers began to talk about the Williams Selyem Pinot Noir in revered tones. The Hacienda Del Rio label (below right) looked exactly like the current Williams Selyem label, using the same letterpress lettering, color and paper. A complaint from Hacienda Winery prompted the partners to drop the original name and substitute their own beginning with the 1984 vintage.



Williams was a burly vintner who had an uncanny and self-taught sense of how Pinot Noir should be vinified. He never set foot in Burgundy. Production methods were old-fashioned to say the least, prompted by the lack of capital. In the early years, Burt continued his job in San Francisco as did Ed at Speer's Market and they took vacations at crush time. They began with little money, never borrowed, and grew 25% every year by starting small and plowing all of their income back into the business. Wives Gayle Selyem and Jan Williams were also partners in the winery which early on hired no outside help. It was a perfect business partnership as Burt was driven to make world-class wine and Ed was determined to create a successful business from local agriculture. Burt preferred colorful sport shirts with suspenders, Ed opted for t-shirts and boots. Both lived simply and shunned publicity. There was never a sign at the garage announcing the winery's location and there was no tasting room.



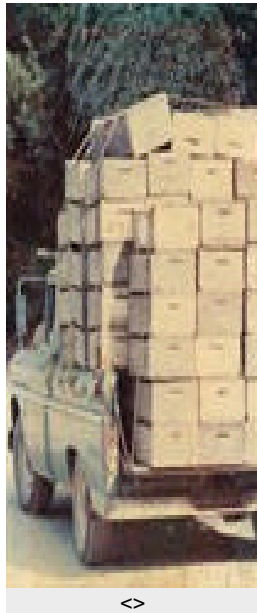
There were no great secrets to their success. They carefully chose their grape sources and did all of the work in the winery themselves. Over time North American vintners have come to realize that Pinot Noir requires delicate handling and constant vigilance in the winery, two things Ed and Burt practiced from the start. Their winemaking methods were Old World (Burgundian if you will) primarily out of necessity because they had little money to fund their operation. Their techniques were very labor-intensive and inefficient, but the result justified the effort. The Williams Selyem Pinot Noirs were brimming with varietal character and although light in color, they had superb aromatic and flavor intensity.



Denise Selyem, Ed's daughter, recently was kind enough to share two photographs of Ed working at the original winery in Fulton. The picture on top shows Ed outside the garage with the small, double-walled, stainless steel, recycled, open-top dairy tanks salvaged from a Windsor dairy farm in which fermentations were carried out. The method of Pinot Noir production employed by Burt and Ed is now currently practiced at least in some form by most California vintners of the Pinot Noir grape. Both Burt and Ed constantly checked on the grapes in the vineyard. The grapes were picked ripe, put into wooden crates and transported by pickup truck to the winery (see old photo on page 6) where they were hand-sorted destemmed. Fermentations were long and cool. They got into the tanks and did

some punch downs, but there was no crushing. The must was lightly pressed using a hand-operated basket press dating from 1906. The wine was gravity-racked and the last gallons of juice were lifted out of the tanks in buckets. The wine never saw a pump, a fining agent, or filtration. Aging was carried out in mostly new French oak 225-liter barrels from Troncais made by Francois Freres. The barrels were never used more than twice. The wine was hand-bottled, labeled and foiled.

The other photo on page 5 shows Ed inside one of the large shipping cargo containers which were rigged to store barrels. The containers once held New Zealand lamb carcasses. Ed developed the concept of a mailing list to distribute their wine long before mailing lists became the accepted way of allocating scarce wine in California. Early on the wine was sold mainly to other winemakers and retailers with good palates to whom the wine was often hand delivered.



The more wine Williams Selyem made, the more favorable the press that followed, causing a snowball effect in demand. The **1985 Williams Selyem Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** became the most seminal wine in the history of California Pinot Noir. This wine won the Sweepstakes at the California State Fair Wine Competition, voted the best of the 2,136 wines entered by 416 California wineries in 1987. 295 cases of the wine were produced and it sold for \$16 a bottle! A copy of the original newspaper article which appeared in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat is on page 7 which includes the photo of Ed I obtained from Denise on page 5.

One of the keys to the success of Williams Selyem was that they were able to successfully contract with the very best growers in the Russian River Valley. It was a simpler time and the growers were friendly and unassuming folks that were easy to work with. All of Williams Selyem contracts were on a handshake basis. Williams Selyem never did own any vineyards. Their now famous vineyard sources for Pinot Noir included Rochioli Vineyard, Allen Vineyard, Cohn Vineyard, and Olivet Lane Vineyard in the Russian River Valley, Summa Vineyard, Coastlands Vineyard, and Hirsch Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast, and Ferrington Vineyard in Anderson Valley. In 1989, Howard Allen, owner of Allen Vineyard which was located across Westside Road from Rochioli, built them a winery on his ranch which they leased allowing them to move out of their rented garage in Fulton.

Williams Selyem Pinot Noir wine became so popular that a waiting list was developed for those begging to get on the mailing list. Eventually 85% of their wine was sold directly to individuals on the carefully guarded mailing list. Ed managed the list masterfully and enjoyed being in contact with, visiting with, and learning from his devoted customers.



Ed Selyem in his and his partner's tiny, but widely heralded Williams-Selyem Winery

Champion wine via garage

Williams-Selyem takes top prize at state fair

By TIM TESCONI
Staff Writer

Out of a tiny garage behind somebody's house in Fulton came the wine judged the best at the California State Fair.

The garage is rented by two regular kind of guys, one from Sebastopol and the other from Forestville, who work by day as a grocery store accountant and a newspaper proofreader.

You should also know that the state fair sweepstakes winner, the best of the 2,136 wines entered by 418 California wineries, was fermented in an old milk tank salvaged from a Windsor dairy farm. The grapes that went into the wine were packed in wooden boxes and the must — the juice, skins and seeds — was squeezed ever so gently in an ancient, hand-operated basket press, circa 1906.

The much-heralded pinot noir, which hasn't been released but already is lusted after by wine enthusiasts around the country, is stored in a ship's cargo container that once held New Zealand lamb carcasses.

But that's the way things are done at Williams-Selyem Winery, a minuscule Fulton winery that operates on a shoestring but is creating ripples in the wine world. There's nothing fancy here, except the wine. Williams-Selyem proves that you don't have to spend millions of dollars on castle-like structures to produce world-class wine.

"Basically, this is a low budget kind

WILLIAMS
SELYEM



1985

PINOT NOIR
SONOMA COUNTY

Russian River Valley

KOCHOLI VINEYARD

Alcohol by Volume 12.5 Percent

Contains No Sulfites

Produced & Bottled by

Williams & Selyem Winery

P.O. Box 108, Fulton, Sonoma Co., CA 95626

The label of Williams-Selyem pinot noir that has the wine world's attention

of thing," said Ed Selyem, in what could be the understatement of the year. "When we started, we said the money we invested in the winery would be our Individual Retirement Accounts if everything went as planned ... and if not, then we would have a lot of good wine to drink ourselves."

Selyem, 42, a Sebastopol resident who works as the accountant and wine buyer at Speer's Market in Forestville, and his partner Burt Williams, 46, a Forestville resident employed weekdays as a proofreader for The San Francisco Chronicle, are the principals in the winery that bears their names. Wives Gayle Selyem and Jan Williams also are partners in the wine

operation, which hires no extra help, has no tasting room, doesn't court wine writers and, yet, sells everything it makes, usually before the wine is released.

The owners also are proud that they are debt free, plowing all profits back into their vinous venture and making it a point to pay for their grapes and other supplies within 24 hours.

The Williams-Selyem 1985 Pinot Noir was named the best wine at this year's California State Fair wine competition, according to one of the wine judges. Fair officials, who plan to release the winners at a press conference Tuesday in Sacramento and don't want the conference to lose any of its thunder, would not confirm that Williams-Selyem had captured the fair's highest honor. But by the end of last week the word was out.

Williams and Selyem said news had leaked to them about the state fair sweepstakes, but they are waiting until after Tuesday's ceremonies before they uncork the celebratory champagne.

Although they are excited about the sweepstakes, Williams and Selyem said they weren't surprised. After all, when they started the part-time venture eight years ago, their goal was "to make a pinot noir that was as good as any in the world."

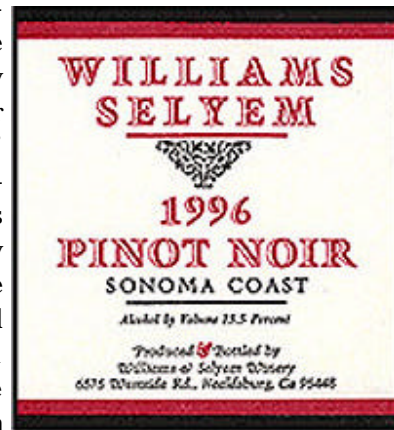
Excellence doesn't come easy, however.

"It's a lot of hard work and requires that you just pay attention to detail. It's also getting good grapes, which for us means buying them in the western part of Sonoma County in the Russian River Valley region," said Williams, who is the winemaker. He didn't study enology at Davis or Fresno. He is self-taught, learning winemaking by

See Winery, Page E2

Williams Selyem produced credible Zinfandels (Ed and Burt thought initially that Zinfandel would be their most successful wine) and Chardonnays, but it was the Pinot Noirs that drew most of the attention. The Pinot Noirs were amazingly fruity and complex when young and seemed to age better than most Pinot Noirs in California. The Pinot Noirs peaked around 6-7 years after release, but it was very difficult to avoid drinking them young. The unlikely owners and the scarcity of their wine created a mystique, but it was the wine's quality and consistency that was the attraction. I was one of the fortunate ones to be included on the mailing list beginning in 1991 (customer #3081) and the greatest California Pinot Noir I have ever had was the **1992 Williams Selyem Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**. Alas, I learned recently that you can never go back. I purchased a bottle of this wine on the secondary market as well as a bottle of the 1990 vintage. Now 15 and 17 years old respectively, the wines showed brief flashes of their former brilliance upon opening, but quickly faded to ordinary drink ability. A copy of my 1991 vintage offering from Williams Selyem is on page 9.

Wine writers of the 1990s spoke about Williams Selyem with superlatives previously reserved for Burgundy such as, "Well-balanced, ripe and juicy flavors, rich and supple texture, voluptuous and intensely flavored, delicacy and finesse with profound flavor." Dan Berger raved, "Best Pinot Noir in America and a rival to the best in the world." Matt Kramer anointed Williams Selyem, "The Best Pinot Noir in California." Anthony Dias Blue chimed in, "Williams Selyem Pinot Noir shines above the rest." The customers were among the most devoted of any winery I have experienced then and now. Chris Crevasse of Tennessee wrote, "We are a little concerned about my brother-in-law, who had never tried world-class wine until we shared a bottle of your 1991 Olivet Lane with him. Now he's lost interest in work and has moved the La-Z-Boy downstairs in the wine cellar. He claims he just wants to watch but it's hard to say what needs watching down there. We're all hopeful that he's just displaying the initial zeal of a new convert, and that he will return to a more or less normal life when he gets accustomed to venerating your wine."



Win Wilson and Jack Daniels, the Napa Valley importers of Domaine de la Romanee-Conti came calling to Williams Selyem in 1992. They wanted to compare wines. 22 wines and 5 hours later, no conclusions were publicly reported, but the reason to do such a comparative tasting indicated the cache that Williams Selyem had gained with the wine industry.

The popularity of their wines took their toil over the years on Ed and Burt. Managing the mailing list and the hoards of wine enthusiasts trying to get on the list was a daunting task. Two of the seven full-time employees in the mid 1990s were designated as "keepers of the list." Frank Prial, writing in *The New York Times* (March 19, 1997), related a story about Ed Bradley, a correspondent on CBS's "60 Minutes," and a wine enthusiast who wanted to get on the mailing list. Burt Williams said, "He told us that if we didn't put him on the list, he'd get Andy Rooney to do a commentary on people who keep lists. Well, we couldn't have that. So we put him on." The partnership slowly developed some rife and Williams Selyem was put on the market in 1997. It was eventually sold to John Dyson in 1998 for \$9.5 million. The official word was that Ed developed serious back problems from lifting wine cases over the years, but the reasons had to be more complicated, yet were never divulged. The last vintage that Ed and Burt vinified at Williams Selyem was 1997, with Burt consulting on the 1998 vintage. At the time the winery was sold, there were 10,000 customers on the mailing list.

John Dyson, a wealthy New York politician, was a former New York state agriculture commissioner and a former deputy mayor under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. He owns Millbrook Vineyards in upstate New York and Villa Pillo Estate in Tuscany as well as Mistral and Vista Verde Vineyards on the central California coast. He essentially paid a lot of money for the Williams Selyem name since Williams Selyem owned

no vineyards or winery. In addition, he lost some hand-shake agreements such as the grapes from Olivet Lane, Summa and Rochioli's West Block. Several of the vineyard sources were retained.

Ed and Burt almost closed the winery for good before agreeing to sell Williams Selyem to Dyson, a long time member of the mailing list. Upon purchasing the winery, Dyson hired the relatively unknown Bob Cabral as his winemaker. Cabral (customer number 576 on the Williams Selyem list) was the son of grape farmers who earned a degree in enology at Fresno State. He learned his trade at De Loach Vineyards, Knude, Alderbrook and Hartford Court. Since assuming winemaking responsibilities, Cabral has tried to follow Williams' winemaking methods. After an inauspicious start (it is always difficult to follow a legend), he is producing Pinot Noirs that are still eagerly sought after by the now 15,000 customers on the mailing list. The wines are a touch higher in alcohol, deeper in color, and offer more fruit-driven flavors. As the winery now celebrates its 25th Anniversary with the release of the 2005 vintage, the wines are carrying the flag with respectability and the single-vineyard designates continue to be the stars.

Burt now splits his time between his ranch in the Anderson Valley and his fishing boat in Santa Barbara. He grows Pinot Noir on his Morning Dew Vineyard and sells the grapes to his daughter at Brogan Cellars and to Woodenhead and Whitcraft. When I asked him the inevitable question about making his own Pinot Noir again after the non-compete agreement ends next year, he was noncommittal, but said, "If I do decide to do it, I will devote all my energies seriously to the task. I will make small amounts and it will cost a lot of money." Ed has been spending his summers in Alaska and winters in both California and Hawaii. His daughter, Denise Selyem and her husband Kirk Hubbard, craft Pinot Noirs under the WesMar label, working in a small winery in Sebastopol reminiscent in size of the original garage that Ed and Burt started with. Over the years, Williams Selyem became a training ground for many other winemakers and a number of labels carry on the legacy including Pappapietro Perry, Woodenhead, George, Cobb, and Anthill Cellars.

Williams & Selyem Winery
 6575 Westside Road
 Healdsburg, CA 95448
 707-433-6425

Date: Aug 23, 1993 Invoice #: 3081-F93 Customer #: 3081
 Sold To: Ship To:

William L. Guffey MD
 5451 La Palma Ave Suite 44
 La Palma, CA 90623
 714-522-4862

Quantity (bottles)	Description	Price per bottle	Total
5.00	1991 Pinot Noir, Rochioli Vineyard, Russian River Valley (Fifths)	\$45.00	\$225.00
12.00	1991 Pinot Noir, Allen Vineyard, Russian River Valley (Fifths)	\$35.00	\$420.00
1.00	1991 Pinot Noir, Allen Vineyard, Russian River Valley (Magnerna)	\$70.00	\$70.00
	1991 Pinot Noir, Summa Vineyard, Russian River Valley (Fifths)	\$100.00	
3.00	1991 Chardonnay, Allen Vineyard, RRV (Fifths)	\$30.00	\$90.00
Gallons: 4.40		Subtotal:	\$ 805.00
Balance Due: \$887.37		Shipping & Handling:	\$ 21.36
Delivery Method: UPS Ground		CA Tax:	\$ 61.01
		Total Cost:	\$ 887.37

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

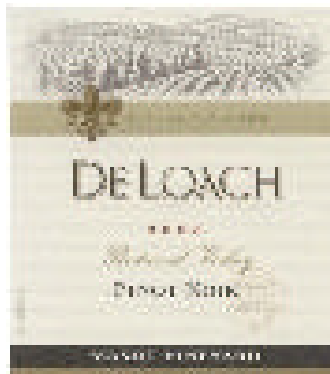
THIS order is based on the Standing Order provided by you, and the wine availability.
 Standing Orders can be changed during the year, merely by contacting us at the winery.
 Requests for increases to THIS order can be noted by you & we'll invoice you LATER for the increase. IF we can fill it
 Any DECREASES in THIS order can be done by your SHORT paying & noting the item(s) to be decreased.
 Please note the delivery method is based on your personal history. Changes can be made by noting on this invoice.
 Delivery rates: CA: \$1/bottle, OR, WA, NV, AZ, NM, ID, MO, IL, WI, CO: \$1.25/bottle, OTHERS: \$3/bottle.
 Because you're a traveler you have until OCTOBER 9 to get a check here.

THIS IS YOUR INVOICE THANK YOU FOR YOUR ORDER

Tasty Pinots from the Russian River Valley

The following Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs were tasted recently. All of them were commendable, some even more considering their price/value ratio. They are listed in no particular order.

De Loach Vineyards De Loach Vineyards celebrated their 30th vintage with the release of the 2005 vintage. This venerated Russian River winery encountered financial difficulties and entered bankruptcy in 2003, eventually being purchased by the Boisset Family Estates of France. Since the change of hands, the winery has reached new heights. Accomplished winemaker Greg LaFollette (below) has been given the reigns, biodynamic farming of the estate's 22 acres has been instituted, and the wines have continued to reach improve with every vintage.

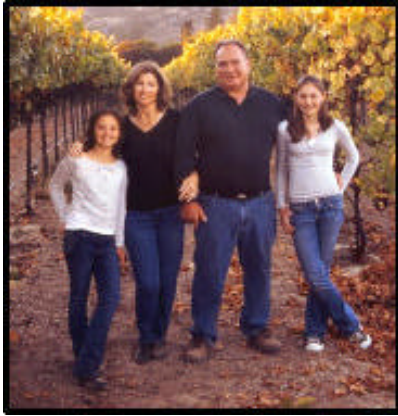


2005 De Loach Vineyards Russian River Valley OFS Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$28. This wine is a reserve level Pinot Noir (OFS stands for "Only Finest Selection"). Open-top oak fermenters are used in the vinification. These fermenters offer the advantages of advantageous temperature maintenance, slow and gentle fermentation, and ideal extraction. *Very nice cherry and raspberry infused wine which is elegant, silky and nicely balanced. There are pleasing wood overtones and the lively acid make it a delicious wine with roast chicken.*

De Loach Vineyards is located at 1791 Olivet Road, Santa Rosa. The winery is open for tours and tasting from 10-4:30 daily. OFS Reserve wines may be tasted with food for a small charge. The phone number is 707-526-9111 and the website is www.deloachvineyards.com. The winery also produces a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$20) which is often served in restaurants, and single vineyard Pinot Noirs including Masut Vineyard (\$45), Sonoma Stage Vineyard (\$85) and an appellation Pinot Noir from the Green Valley (\$45). The wines are in widespread retail distribution.

Balletto Vineyards John Balletto started farming in Sonoma County at the age of 17 in 1977. Today he owns 280 acres in western Sebastopol devoted to wine grapes. 60 acres are planted to multiple clones of Pinot Noir. The western edges of his property are shared with the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetland habitat and are preserved lands. 2001 was the first year that wine was made under the Balletto label. The winemaker is Dan Cederquist.

2006 Balletto Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 3,178 cases, \$20. Clones 667, 777, 32, 114, Swan, 37, 9 and 23. Aged 9 months in French oak. *Black cherry nose with a forest floor accent. Nicely spiced fruit flavors. A medium-bodied, light and silky wine which finishes clean. Very enjoyable and a great drink for a Jackson.*



Balletto Vineyards is at 5700 Occidental Road, Santa Rosa. The tasting room is open daily from 10-4 and is shared with Dutton-Goldfield wines which are made at the Balletto winery. The phone is 707-568-2455 and the website is www.ballettovineyards.com. The wines are sold on the website.

Moshin Vineyards Moshin Vineyard sits on Russian River Valley's Rodeo Drive of Pinot Noir - Westside Road. Moshin Vineyards winery is one of the few gravity-flow wineries in Sonoma County. Owner Rick Moshin is a former mathematics professor at San Jose State University who has farmed and sold Pinot Noir in the Russian River Valley for several years. His recently built winery was designed to utilize a four-tiered gravity flow system. The costs of building a true gravity flow winery prevent many from accomplishing the task - the retaining walls for the Moshin Winery cost \$500,000 alone. The Moshin Winery is built on a hill with the front facing formed from old barn wood to give it an aged look. The crush pad is on the highest or first level. The sorted and destemmed grapes then drop directly into one of the fermenters on the second level. A hose connected to the fermenters directs the juice to the tanks on the third level. Wine then flows by gravity directly into barrels and is stored in the cellar. The bottling room is on the fourth level and receives wine from the cellar into the bottle filler and then the bottle. The winery has all sorts of technological wizardry including custom-made, closed-top fermentation tanks, specially made settling tanks, an ozone machine for sterilization, Italian membrane presses and destemmers, a power washer and barrel cleaner, and a pneumatic punch down system. The current permit allows for 30,000 cases. Custom crush is available at the winery and Merry Edwards, Guy Davis (Davis Family Vineyards), and George Levkoff (George Wine Company) among others have made wine here.



Rick Moshin farms a total of 18 acres and produces about 5,000 cases of Pinot Noir each year. Six different bottlings make up the offerings. Moshin has retired from his academic job to pursue wine-making full time. He is a self-taught grape grower and winemaker with over 30 years of experience. The Moshin label dates to 1989 when Moshin traded grapes for crush services with Gary Farrell and Davis Bynum. He remembers way back in the early 1970s when he used to drive along Westside Road dreaming of owning some acreage in the area and now feels blessed to own vineyards here.

2005 Moshin Vineyards Estate Bottled Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 765 cases, \$28. *Lovely and fresh cherry and strawberry scents linger in the nose. Straight-forward red fruit flavors are enhanced with a subtle woody overtone. Light in body, the wine drinks easy.*



Moshin Vineyards The winery is open for tasting from 11-4:30 daily, tours are by appointment. The address is 10295 Westside Road, Healdsburg. The wines are available on the website at www.moshinvineyards.com and by phone at 707-433-5499.

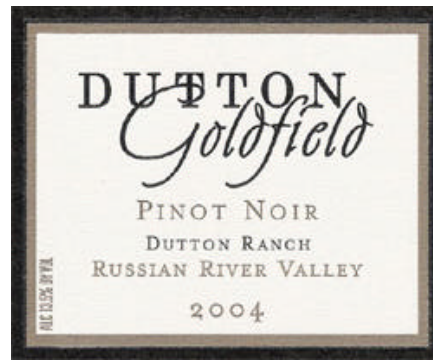
Davis Family Vineyards Proprietor Guy Davis never set out to make wine but while attending college and majoring in economics, he worked in a French restaurant, developing an interest in the grape. Subsequently he was a cellar rat at a few wineries and gained valuable wine knowledge as a wine broker. It was while working at Sky Vineyards in the Mayacamas Mountains that he found his winemaking calling. In 1996, he bought a property in the heart of the Russian River Valley that had been abandoned for 20 years. He planted 6 acres of Pinot Noir to clones 115, 667, 777 and Pommard and rescued a 2.5 acre parcel of Zinfandel on the property which had been planted in 1896. He farms his vineyard meticulously himself with the assistance of his son. Davis has an attractive small winery and tasting room located on the banks of the Russian River just outside of downtown Healdsburg. Currently 4,000 cases of wine are produced including Chardonnay, Cabernet, Syrah, Zinfandel, and a Sauvignon Blanc (Gusto) from New Zealand (Guy travels down under during the winter here).

2005 Davis Family Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 957 cases, \$40. Fermented in small temperature-controlled fermenters. Each clone was kept separate and blended later according to Davis's preferences. Aging was carried out for 11 months in 40% new French oak from Allier and Tronçais forests, air-dried a minimum of 30 months. *The aromatics need some air to emerge, showing seductive darker fruits. The fruit attack is quite pleasing with black cherry, raisin and mushroom leading to a finish with barely perceptible tannins. Nicely crafted and easy to like, it is a very good wine that is still a bit closed and will improve with more time in the bottle. Hold off for another 6 months.*



Davis Family Vineyards is located at 52 Front Street, Healdsburg. The tasting room is open from Thursday thru Sunday from 11-4:30. Private tastings by appointment. The wines are largely sold through a mailing list but are available by phone at 707-569-0171 or through the website at www.daviswines.com. Davis also makes and sells an excellent artisan olive oil from the Sierra Foot-hills. A very consistent and reliable producer.

Dutton-Goldfield This winery is a partnership between winemaker Dan Goldfield and viticulturist Steve Dutton. Steve (left in photo below) is the son of the noted Russian River Valley grape farmer, Warren Dutton, who first planted Pinot Noir in the cool Green Valley region of the Russian River Valley in the early 1970s. The story goes that it was Warren that suggested Steve and Dan form a partnership in 1998. The label was consummated at a Sebastopol pizza parlor with a handshake and the winery has been producing superb Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, Syrah and Chardonnay ever since. Dan is an energetic and high-spirited winemaker who intended to enter medical school. In 1983, he was at a tasting with noted winemaker Larry Brooks (Acacia, Campion) when he had an epiphany and decided to become a winemaker himself. He received a master's degree in enology from University of California Davis and honed his skills at Mondavi, Schramsberg, La Crema and Hartford Court.



2006 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$31. *Mineral imbued black cherry scents evolve in the glass to a purely dark fruit compote which is very alluring. Black raspberry flavors are set off by a hint of oak. The texture is soft and the finish pleasantly tangy with some unresolved tannins. Plenty to like here.*

2005 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch/Freestone Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 361 cases, \$58. The vineyard was planted in 1997 on the far southwest edge of the Russian River appellation. Clones 667, 115 and 2A. Aged 17 months in 55% new French oak. *Deep and haunting aromatics featuring black cherries and wild blackberries. A plush mouthful of dark Pinot extract with a hint of herbs, spice and earth. Succulent and robust with a long, scented aftertaste. Beautifully balanced, clean and pure. Power without flab. This one makes you want to clap your hands.*

2005 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch/Sanchiotti Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 343 cases, \$58. Goldfield has worked with fruit from this vineyard at La Crema and Hartford Court before bottling it under the Dutton-Goldfield label beginning in 2002. *A fruit driven beauty with demure dark red Pinot fruits that are elegant and juicy. More subdued and sensuous than the Freestone Hill with well-concealed tannins, it will be even better with more time in the bottle.*

2005 Dutton-Goldfield McDougall Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 250 cases, \$55. From the true Sonoma Coast, close to Hirsch Vineyard at 1,100 feet. Yields were about 1 ton per acre. *Enticing nose of blue fruits, plum, ocean air and earth. Supple in the mouth with delicate wild berry fruits, suave tannins and a snappy, clean finish.*

Dutton-Goldfield wines are made at Balletto where they share a tasting room (see page 10-11 for details). All of the Pinot Noirs clearly stand out and are extremely well crafted. As they should, each wine reflects a different terroir and it is to Dan's credit that he lets the wines show off their distinctive terroir-driven traits. The wines are largely sold through a mailing list but are available on the website at www.duttongoldfield.com. The phone is 707-829-6766. Wine club discount is 15%. Magnums are available. Annual production is 9,000 cases.

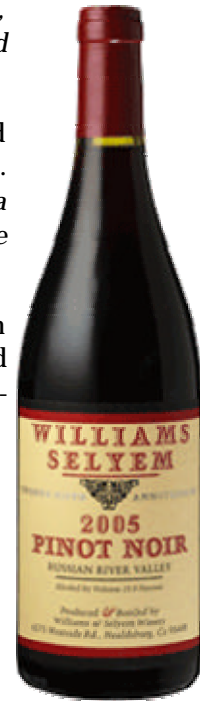
Williams Selyem I must admit that I have been a bit reticent about Williams Selyem Pinot Noirs since the winery was sold. The prices have seemed to escalate noticeably and my allocations have shrunk. Recently, however, what I have tasted has been drawing me back and I think Bob Cabral (pictured below) is really hitting his stride.

2004 Williams Selyem Rochioli Riverblock Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$72. *Voluptuous Bing cherry perfume which draws you in and won't let go. Pure and precise dark cherry flavors with a sidecar of saffras and oak. Full-bodied, rich and full on the mid palate, clean and refreshing at the end. The texture is silky and sensuous. A very classy wine and one to buy for sure.*

2004 Williams Selyem Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$42. Sourced from several vineyards, mainly the winery's Drake Estate Vineyard in Guerneville. *Cherries, herbs, oak and port aromas lead to a mouthful of bright Bing cherry fruit and a sidecar of clove and other spices. A pleasurable drink that would be better enjoyed at the dinner table then sipped for contemplation.*



Williams Selyem built a new winery at 6575 Westside Road in Healdsburg. The wines are highly allocated and are sold through a mailing list at www.williamsselyem.com. 707-433-6425. Tours and tastings are by appointment.

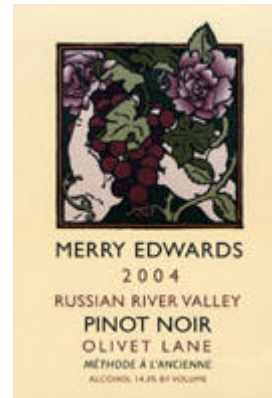


Merry Edwards Merry Edwards, often called the “Queen of Pinot,” has been a spokesperson for Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and her wines have been best sellers on restaurant wine lists in this country for many years. She has been making wine for 35 years including stints at Mt Eden (where she worked from 1974 to 1977 and developed the Mt Eden clone of Pinot Noir - UCD 37), Liparita, Matanzas Creek, and Pellegrini Family. In 1997, she started her own winery and released a Russian River Pinot Noir and an Olivet Lane Pinot Noir. Unlike many women who craft Pinot Noir, her wines are bold expressions of the grape and typically show flavors of black cherry, dark chocolate, mushroom and lavender. She noted in *Wine & Spirits* (Fall, 2004), “We work with a grape deficient in phenolics and tannins. I'm going to do what I have to do to maintain them.” She currently crafts Pinot Noirs from several Russian River Valley sources including Flax Vineyard, Olivet Lane Vineyard (my favorite), Tobias Glen Vineyard, Klopp Ranch Vineyard and her own (with husband and business partner Ken Coopersmith) 24-acre Meredith Estate Vineyard and 9-acre Coopersmith Vineyard. She made some lovely Pinot Noirs from Windsor Gardens Vineyard but this vineyard was a victim of housing development a few years ago. She was chosen Winemaker of the Year by the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2004.

2005 Merry Edwards Tobias Glen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$51. *The wine starts off with aromas of red cherry, forest floor and oak. The oak continues throughout ending in a dry and woody finish. The wild berry fruit is stacked and packed.*

2005 Merry Edwards Meredith Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$54. *The aromatics display oak-dusted black cherries and blackberries.. The ripe dark fruits are cloaked in oak on the palate and the wine finishes with plentiful herbal notes, a slight bitterness and healthy tannins.*

Merry Edwards Wines are sold primarily through a mailing list and to restaurants. A new winery was completed in time for the 2007 vintage and is located at the site of the Coopersmith Vineyard, 2959 Gravenstein Highway North, Sebastopol. Tours and tastings are available by appointment at 707-823-7466. The wines will appeal to those who prefer their Pinot Noir with deep fruit, heft and oak. For me, the Olivet Lane bottling (reviewed in a previous issue) is clearly the best wine in the lineup. Edwards also crafts an outstanding Sauvignon Blanc. The website is www.merryedwards.com.



Radio-Coteau A very small boutique producer of Pinot Noir from cool vineyards on the Sonoma Coast, in the Russian River Valley and Anderson Valley that proprietor Eric Sussman manages organically. Sussman began his training in France at Domaine Armand in Pommard and Domaine Jacques Prieur in Meursault. Upon returning to Northern California, he worked at Bonny Doon and Dehlinger. After crossing paths with Bill and Joan Smith, the owners of W.H. Smith, Sussman became partners with them in Radio-Coteau Wine Cellars. Production is only 2,600 cases annually of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah. He employs a hands-off style of winemaking which starts with a 7-10 day cold soak, fermentation with natural yeasts, and nothing is added or removed. He doesn't fine or filter and allows his wines to sit on the lees for 16 months with no racking. Sussman is fanatical about quality.

2005 Radio-Coteau Alberigi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 390 cases, \$45. This vineyard is exclusively sourced by Radio-Coteau and lies in the Vine Hill road area. *The nose offers confected and oak-spiced darker Pinot fruits. Richly layered blackberry and black raspberry extract with noticeable but not intrusive tannins. Well-rounded and immensely satisfying now, it is still a touch awkward and will benefit from more time in the bottle. A great expression of Pinot Noir.*



Radio-Coteau is only sold through a highly allocated mailing list at www.radiocoteau.com. The phone number is 707-887-6041. Spectacular wines but a challenge to obtain.

Papapietro Perry Ben Papapietro grew up in a family of home winemakers and wine lovers. He developed a passion for Pinot Noir early on after tasting a number of Burgundies from the mid-1950s. He struck up a friendship with Burt Williams of Williams Selyem fame while both were working at the San Francisco Newspaper Agency. In the 1970s, Ben was helping Burt make his homemade garage wine and he continued to work each harvest at Williams Selyem after the winery was started in the early 1980s. Ben began making his own homemade wine in 1980 and a few years later was joined by Bruce Perry, another fellow worker at the San Francisco Newspaper Agency. Upon the urgings of family and friends, they started Papapietro Perry in 1998 with an initial release of 75 cases of Pinot Noir. Today they produce well-regarded small lots of Pinot Noir from prime vineyards on the Sonoma Coast and in the Russian River and Anderson Valleys.



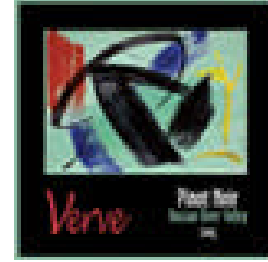
2005 Papapietro Perry Leras Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 950 cases, \$46. This vineyard is located off Woolsey Road and is planted to Pommard, 115, 667 and 777 clones of Pinot Noir. The wine was aged for 11 months in 50% new Francois Freres oak. *Lovely hi-tone cherry aromas. Flavors are cherry driven with attractive side notes of herbs, cocoa, cola, spice and a pinch of oak. Modest in weight and light on its feet, this wine oozes finesse and charm. Well crafted and recommended.*

Papapietro Perry wines are available through retail channels and on the website at www.papapietro-perry.com. A tasting room is open daily from 11-4:30 at 4791 Dry Creek Road in Healdsburg. The phone is 707-433-0422. The wine above is sold out at the winery but may be available at fine retail stores.

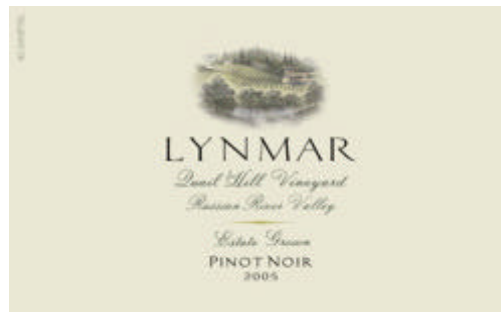
Aubin Cellars Verve Jerome Aubin is a Frenchman who grew up in Burgundy near Beaune. He resides in Northern California where he imports French and Hungarian oak wine barrels. Along with winemaker Laren Tayerie, he crafts small lots of Pinot Noir from the Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley from a small winery in Novato. Aubin also produces a Pinot Noir from the Dundee Hills at Carlton Winemaker's Studio. The name "Verve" translates to "creative enthusiasm."

2005 Verve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 375 cases, \$33. The grapes come from an unnamed well known vineyard located between Sebastopol and Forestville. The clones are an unusual mix of 115, Beringer, Jackson 9 and Swan. The wine was fermented in a Rousseau 2 ton French oak open-top fermenter and aged for 17 months in 40% new French oak followed by 6 months in bottle. *This wine smelled great with rich black cherry, plum, spice and pleasant oak aromas. Black cherry-infused with sidecars of anise, herbs and spice, this medium to full bodied Pinot was soft and smooth in the mouth and left a refreshing impression on the finish. Plenty of Pinot love here.*

Aubin Cellars address is 6050 Colton Blvd, Oakland. The phone is 510-339-0170. The wines are available on the website at www.aubincellars.com and through fine retail shops. There is a mailing list. No tasting or tours.



Lynmar Winery The Fritz family purchased the Quail Hill Vineyard in 1980 and founded Lynmar Winery in 1990. In 2004, the winery launched a five-year investment plan to complete a phased replanting of Quail Hill. An impressive new winery and hospitality center was added. Winemaker Hugh Chapelle (and consultant Paul Hobbs) have brought Lynmar to a world-class level. Lynn Fritz is pictured below.

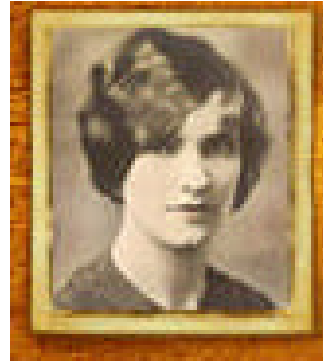


2005 Lynmar Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 3,064 cases, \$36. A blend of fruit from the estate Quail Hill Vineyard and other vineyards in the Russian River Valley locale. *Restrained scents of cherry, herbs and forest floor. Lovely red cherry fruit imbibed with spice. Soft and gentle, it floats across the tongue.*

2005 Lynmar Quail Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 1,459 cases, \$60. Primarily Swan selection from the estate Quail Hill Vineyard. Aged 16 months in 45% new French oak. *Deep, dark ruby in color. A penetrating, rich nose with dark Pinot fruits, forest floor and restrained oak. Gamy and earthy with plenty of black fruit front and center. Very smooth in texture, seamless throughout with a healthy tannic structure. More body, more flavor, more of everything compared to the bottling above.*

Lynmar Winery has a beautiful hospitality center and tasting salon overlooking the estate vineyards. The center, located at 3909 Frei Road in Sebastopol, is open daily from 10-5. The Lynmar Food and Wine Experience pairs small appetizer-sized foods with each of the Lynmar wines. Tours are by appointment. The wines are available on the website at www.lyanmarwinery.com. The phone number is 707-829-3344. Lynmar has released its first vineyard-designate Pinot Noir from outside the Estate, the Jenkins Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. There is also a reserve bottling, the Five Sisters Pinot Noir which is spectacular. The Chardonnays and Vin Gris of Pinot Noir are first rate as well. A very classy operation with noteworthy wines.

Dain Wines David Dain Smith produces small amounts of several vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs that are vinified at CrushPad in San Francisco. He still resides in Missouri and commutes to craft his wines. Each of the wines are named for a prominent now-deceased family member (David's maternal grandmother, Cora Whitley Duffer, is pictured on the label of American Beauty reviewed below. Look him up at any of the Pinot Festivals in California - he has an infectious smile and is a great guy to talk Pinot with.



2006 Dain American Beauty Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$48. Dijon clones 115, 667. Aged in 50% new French oak. *Attractive aromatics featuring Bing cherry and wood spice. Red fruits and cola compose the taste track. Very soft and elegant with ample acidity. The aftertaste lingers with a woody bent. The fruits are a little shy at this point and more bottle age should change this.*

Dain Wines are sold primarily through a mailing list at www.dainwines.com. The phone is 417-860-2715.

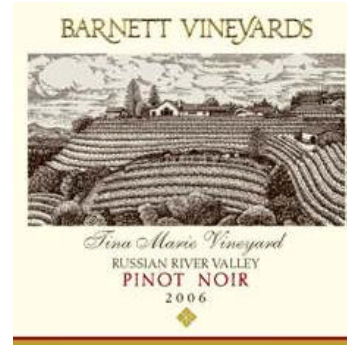
Olson Ogden Wines John Ogden and winemaker Tim Olson started a boutique winery in Sonoma County in 2002, making about 1,000 cases a year of Rhone varietals and Pinot Noir. Tim Olson began crafting wine in his home garage over 20 years ago. A film major in college, he developed enough of a passion for wine that to gain experience, he began working for free at Caymus for Charlie Wagner. Before long, he was rewarded with a paycheck for his hard work and he has never looked back. He made some excellent wines for Tarius before starting Olsen Ogden Wines. Olsen Ogden has gained some national press recognition for their Unti Vineyard Syrah.

2005 Olson Ogden Wines Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 190 cases, \$35. *Appealing Pinot perfume accented with floral and cherry scents. Delicate red fruit flavors with a touch of dust and spice. Quite decent.*

Olson Ogden Wines are sold through a mailing list at www.olsenogdenwines.com. There is some retail distribution. The phone is 707-823-6127.



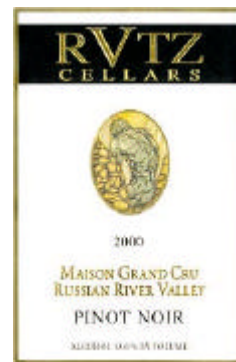
Barnett Vineyards At 2,000 at elevation on Spring Mountain in the Napa Valley, Fiona and Hal Barnett created a vineyard and winery specializing in Cabernet Sauvignon. They make limited amounts of Merlot, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Total production is 6,000 cases. The current winemaker is David Tate who comes to Barnett from Ridge where he as an assistant winemaker.



2006 Barnett Vineyards Tina Marie Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 1180 cases, \$40. Tina Maria Vineyard is in Green Valley, a sub AVA of the Russian River Valley, planted entirely to Dijon clones. *Complex aromatics dominated by blackberries and black raspberries complemented by herbs, hay, oak and barnyard. Juicy and succulent dark fruits with an oak sidecar running throughout. Rich and smooth in texture with integrated tannins. Well-crafted, easy to like and very approachable.*

Barnett Vineyards wines are sold on the website at www.barnettvineyards.com. There is some retail distribution. The winery and vineyards are located at 4070 Spring Mountain Road, St. Helena. The phone is 707-963-7075.

Rutz Cellars Owner Keith Rutz crafts Pinot Noir in the style and flavor of the great Burgundies of Vosne-Romanee and Chambolle-Musigny. His unique winery in Sebastopol is housed in a 5,000 square foot extending 300 feet into a hillside.



2005 Rutz Cellars Maison Grand Cru Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$35. *Very light in color. The nose is quite charming exhibiting crushed strawberries, exotic woods, spice and a floral lift. A very elegant wine with delicate red Pinot fruits with oak accents. This is a wine for those who prefer the feminine side of Pinot Noir.*

Rutz Cellars produces several other Pinot Noirs including two blends - French Cuvee and Sonoma Cuvee - as well as vineyard-designates including Windsor Gardens, Dutton Ranch and Burnside. The wines are sold on the website at www.rutzcellars.com. The caves and winery are located at 3637 Frei Road, Sebastopol. 415-482-6565. Tours and tastings by appointment.

J Vineyards & Winery Judy Jordan founded J in 1986 to produce sparkling wines of distinction as well as still Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir. The winery's vineyard holdings encompass 274 acres of diverse hillside, bench land and valley floor plantings. The J sparkling wines have been exceptional through the years, but the still Pinot Noirs have failed to distinguish. Last year, George Bursick, the former winemaker at Ferrari-Carano, was brought in along with viticulturalist John Erbe to transform J with an emphasis on site-specific Pinot Noir. The 2006 vintage will be the first to fully show the fruits of their efforts.



2005 J Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 22,000 cases, \$32. A blend from all of the estate vineyards. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak. *Rich scents of wild berries and cherries. Subdued red and blue fruits with a leafy and toasty edge. Decent but lacks energy and excitement.*

J Vineyards & Winery has a beautiful tasting and hospitality center at 11447 Old Redwood Highway in Healdsburg, and offers special tasting experiences with wine-food pairings. The wines are in wide retail distribution and offered on the website at www.jwine.com. 707-431-3646.

Pinot Briefs

Pricey Wines Preferred Researchers led by Antonio Rangel and colleagues at the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech) had 20 volunteers (inexperienced wine drinkers) rank their enjoyment of five Cabernet Sauvignon wines tasted while an MRI machine monitored their brain response. They were told they were tasting different wines sold at varying prices. In fact, two sets of wine samples were identical - the \$5 and \$45 wines (both the same \$5 wine) and the \$10 and \$90 wines (both actually were the \$90 wine). The brain scans showed that the greatest pleasure activity occurred when the volunteers drank the wine marked \$90 and the least activity when they drank the wine priced at \$5. The volunteers said they liked the \$90 wine best and the \$5 wine the least. Two weeks later, the volunteers rated the wines without price data and they liked the wines originally marked \$5 and \$45 best and the ones labeled \$10 and \$90 second best. Haven't we all been influenced by price?

2005 Burgs are Lolitas Alan Meadows, aka Burghound, reiterated in the latest issue of his report on Burgundy (Issue 29), that the 2005 vintage is one for the ages. He said, "My in-bottle tastings of the 2005s have served to reinforce my original belief that the vintage is one of the greatest vintages in the history of modern Burgundy." He goes on to explain that the wines are built for the long haul, many have now shut down in bottle, and tasters may be disappointed if they are not experienced in sampling young Burgundy. I have been stocking up on 2005 Burgundy as much as my pocketbook will allow, but have actually tasted few, relying on wines made by Burgundian vintners I respect and whose style I prefer, to direct my purchases. But sometimes you just can't wait, and last week a few of us got together to sample 10 Premier Cru 2005 Burgs. Prices ranged from \$38 (**Domaine Pierre Gelin Clos Napoleon Monopole from Fixin**) to \$150 (**Domaine Marquis D'Angerville Volnay Champans**) with most in the \$70 to \$100 range. Every single wine was stellar, albeit foreboding and in some cases closed and tannic. Partly emptied bottles were corked and sampled two days later and were spectacular indicating that these wines are resistant to oxidation and will have a long life ahead of them. My favorites? **2005 Domaine d'Angerville Volnay Champans, 2005 Bouchard Père et Fils Vigne De L'Infant Jesus, 2005 Domaine Michel Magnien Morey-Saint-Denis Millandes** and the **2005 Domaine Michèle & Patrice Rion Chambolle Musigny Les Charmes** (see p 23 for tasting notes).



Impromptu Wine Glass Testing Over lunch recently, one of my pinotphiles-in-training, Art Fries, brought a couple of Pinots and we sampled them in four different glasses: Riedel Vinum Burgundy Glass, Riedel Oregon Pinot Noir Glass, Riedel Vitis Pinot Noir Glass, and a standard restaurant service glass. The wines were a **2005 Wedell Cellars Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$60 (*an excellent wine with earthy, dark fruits and superb intensity in the mouth; more body and backbone than the Oregon wine*) and a **2005 et Fille Maresh Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 13.6% alc., \$45 (*fragrant and elegant with lovely spiced cherry flavors; more demure than the California wine*). We tried to be very objective. With the California Pinot Noir, we felt the drinking experience (aromatics and flavors) were the same with all three Riedel glasses but clearly inferior with the restaurant glass. With the Oregon Pinot Noir, the Oregon Pinot Noir Glass and the Vitis Pinot Noir Glass clearly showed off the wine the best. The Vitis (the Latin word for 'vine') glass is quite majestic, the tallest machine blown lead crystal Riedel glass to date. The glass was designed by Georg Riedel. The sides of the Vitis bowls flare outward before narrowing toward the rim, maximizing the surface to air space the wine experiences and allowing the wine to aerate within the glass. The glass retails for \$45. Check it out at www.riedel.com.



Breathable Wine Glass A German company, Eisch Glaskultur is producing a “breathable” wine glass that is touted as “revolutionizing the industry.” The Eisch glasses are made from a special lead-free crystal that undergoes a proprietary oxygenation treatment. Oxygen can travel through the glass to aerate the wine quickly. The company claims the resulting aeration over four minutes is equivalent two hours of aeration in a decanter. The glasses are \$49.95 for a set of two and are available at Weaver Wines in Ventura (805-653-9463).

San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition Held in Cloverdale in January, this event is the largest competition of American wines in the world. There were 4,235 wines entered into the 2008 competition, evaluated by a panel of more than 60 professional wine judges. The Best of Class winners in the Pinot Noir competition include the following: Pinot Noir up to \$14.99 - **2005 Concannon Central Coast Limited Release** (\$13.99); Pinot Noir between \$15 and \$24.99 - **2006 Benziger Family Winery Sonoma Coast** (\$24.99); Pinot Noir between \$25 and \$34.99 - **2005 Stephens Moore Vineyard Paso Robles** (\$28); Pinot Noir \$35 and over - **2005 Savannah Chanelle Vineyards Armagh Vineyard Sonoma Coast** (\$40) and **2005 Rodney Strong Reserve Jane’s Vineyard Russian River Valley** (\$45). The Rodney Strong Pinot Noir was the Sweepstakes Winner among red wines. The public tasting of all of the class winners will take place on February 16, 2008 at Fort Mason’s Festival Pavilion in San Francisco from 2-5 PM. Cost is \$50 (advance purchase). For tickets and a full list of the results of the competition go to www.winejudging.com or call 888-695-0886. I must warn you that the public tasting is a rather raucous and crowded affair.



**SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
WINE COMPETITION**

Cyrus Restaurant Wine Dinners The much heralded Cyrus Restaurant in Healdsburg (Michelin Two Stars, SF Chronicle Four Stars. Gourmet #15 of Top 50) has announced its Winter 2008 Winemaker Dinner Series. What an incredible lineup! Chef Douglas Keane crafts seven course tasting menus to complement the wines of the evening’s vintner. January 7th was Screaming Eagle and Jonata with winemakers Andy Erickson and Matt Dees, January 15 was Williams Selyem with Bob Cabral, February 5 will feature Littorai Wines with Ted Lemon, March 5th Margi “Brogan” Wierenga will pour her Brogan Cellars wines, and March 3rd will feature Peay Vineyards with owner Andy Peay and winemaker Vanessa Wong. For further information or to make a reservation, contact the restaurant at 707-433-3311 or www.cyrusrestaurant.com.

Pinot Noir in the Presidio Foggy Bridge, a new winery backed by former Geysler Peak winemaker Daryl Groom and a Silicon Valley investment group plans to build a boutique winery in the San Francisco Presidio National Park, a former United States Army Post. This will be the first winery in a national park and only the second in San Francisco. The plans are for an 8,000 case, 18,000-square-foot winery-restaurant building to be built within a previous airplane hangar on the former air base. The wines produced will include Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa, Zinfandel from Dry Creek and Pinot Noir from Santa Maria. For the full scoop go to www.pressdemoncrat.com.

Scott Paul Selections Burgundy Wine Club A wine club, named The Burgundy Express, will hand pick and ship regularly Scott Paul Selections Burgundies to those eager to explore the wines of Burgundy. Each shipment will consist of an educational and informative tasting flight with a specific topic covered in each shipment. Each twice yearly shipment will contain four to six bottles of Burgundy ranging from \$175-\$250 which will reflect a 20% discount on the wines. Members will also receive a 20% discount for ongoing purchases of Scott Paul Burgundies and a copy of Scott’s *Insiders Guide to Burgundy*. I believe this is the first such wine club in the United States and provides a terrific introduction to learning about this fascinating and complicated wine region. For information and to join The Burgundy Express Wine Club, contact Kelly Karr, kellykarr@scottpaul.com or 503-852-7300.

2005 Burgundies Worth Buying

2005 Domaine Marquis D'Angerville Volnay 1er Cru 13.5% alc., \$70. *Charming black raspberry and floral aromatics with a hint of iodine. Dark fruits with side notes of cola and mocha, velvety texture, brisk acidity and a lingering finish.*

2005 Domaine Marquis D'Angerville 1er Cru Volnay Champans 13.5% alc., \$150. *Deep and rich dark red Pinot fruits with plenty of woody scents, powerful but lovely black raspberry fruit and spice and a very healthy tannic spine. There is tremendous material here waiting to get out and several years are required for full enjoyment.*

2005 Domaine Gelin Fixin 1er Cru Clos Napoleon 13,5% alc., \$37. *Hi-tone red cherry nose with copious minerality, herbs and some roseate charm. Dusty cherry fruit on the attack that falls off on the tangy finish. Very light bodied and still a bit closed.*

2005 Domaine Heresztyn Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru Les Millandes 13% alc., \$80. *This has a nose of oak-infused Pinot fruits that you can really stick your nose into. Cherry fruits and oak predominate with some nice earthiness. The fruit was reticent but after two days in an opened bottle that was recorked, the wine was spectacular with a fuzzy texture and marvelous fruit expression. I finished the bottle off with dinner, smiling the whole time.*

2005 Domaine Michel Magnien Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru Millandes 13% alc., \$80. *A nicely structured wine featuring sumptuous dark Pinot extract. Char, oak and coffee notes are carried throughout. A plush and meaty mouth feel and silky tannins make for a superb drinking experience.*

2005 Maison Frederic Magnien Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru Ruchots 13% alc., \$75. *Heady and sweet Pinot fruit with a touch of herbs, oak and barnyard. Plenty of oak backbone and drying tannins on the finish will need time to resolve.*

2005 Thierry Violet-Gullemard 1er Cru Pommard La Platiere 13% alc., \$60. *Spectacular aromatics featuring cherries and root beer. Very pure and precise fruit and a plush mouth feel. Approachable for a Pommard, but still reticent and brooding. Hold off several years.*

2005 Bouchard Pere et Fils Vigne De L'Infant Jesus 13% alc., \$95. *Shy and subdued but what potential here. Chewy berry fruit with a sexy black raspberry kiss on the finish. Earthy and notable barnyard influences. Tannins are very fine. I have always been a fan of this wine and this is the best one I have had over the last twelve years.*

2005 Maison Aymeric Mazilla Hospices de Nuits Nuits-Saint-Georges 1er Cru "Les Rues De Chaux" 13% alc., \$60. *A cherry-driven wine that is soft and simple with a modest tannic backbone and lively, tart finish. Needs plenty of air time to blossom.*

2005 Domaine Patrice and Michele Rion Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru Les Charmes 13% alc., \$119. *Slightly confected redder fruits on the nose, prodigious ripe fruit stuffing featuring dark cherries, black raspberries and blackberries, subtle citrus notes, a wooly texture and deft oak highlights round out a magnificent wine. The most California-styled of the lineup if you will. This is built for the long haul. One to buy*

Except for the D'Angerville wines which are in high demand and difficult to locate, all of these Burgundies are still available in the retail marketplace.


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The Long and Winding Pinot Road, Part III

I began to search the aisles of well-stocked liquor stores for red Burgundy. In my price range, the pickings were slim, and the ones I could afford were thin, rustic, acidic and terribly disappointing. There wasn't much California Pinot Noir worth pursuing in the early 1970s. Some early signs of success were coming out of Mt Eden and Chalone, but these were off my radar and might as well have been on another planet. Frustrated, I turned to the dark side and began to dabble in Cabernet and Petite Sirah. I was particularly drawn to Petite Sirah because of its bold sweet blackberry jam flavors and black pepper spice. It seemed to be a perfect accompaniment to my culinary skills which consisted primarily of grilling steaks on the barbecue.

There was one Petite Sirah in particular that caught my attention - Concannon Vineyard. Maybe it was the fact that Concannon was the first California winery to label the varietal Petite Sirah on the bottle (1964), or maybe it was because the winery had some familiar kinship (founder James Concannon was born on St. Patrick's Day in Ireland, the homeland of my great grandfather). Most likely, though, it was because I liked the masculine wine, and as a young bachelor, identified with its machismo style. Concannon Vineyard, located on the East Bay of Northern California in Livermore, was the first winery I actually visited. It was around 1974 when I went to Concannon and bought a case of wine, one of life's rites of passage.

The father grape of Petite Sirah is Syrah and the mother is Peloursin, a humble grape from southern France. Since cross-regional breeding of grapes was frowned on in France, Petite Sirah was not accepted there and found a new home in the United States where, along with Zinfandel, has become America's own varietal. It was first brought to America from France in the 1889s. It survived phylloxera in the 1890s, both World Wars, the Depression and Prohibition (Petite Sirah was a main ingredient in sacramental wines).

I began medical practice in 1975, and my marriage in 1977 and two sons who followed shortly thereafter took my attention away from wine for a few years. Mr Stox Restaurant would revive my passion. To be continued... ..