



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Anderson Noir Valley Pinot Festival: After the Smoke Clears

Mendocino County's Anderson Valley achieved validation as a premium grape-growing region in the early 1980s when Roederer Estate established extensive plantings and made stellar sparkling wines. In more recent years, the region has placed an emphasis on cultivating Pinot Noir clones appropriate for still wine. Coupled with the widespread adoption of modern winemaking and viticulture practices, Anderson Valley producers are now crafting highly regarded, world class Pinot Noirs. Many align the region's style closely with Oregon's Willamette Valley, leading to the offhanded title given to Anderson Valley of "Baja Oregon."

The 2007 class of Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs can hold their own with any appellation in California, but the 2008 vintage presented a significant setback. The small number of wineries and the anti development attitude that pervades the Anderson Valley has caused a lag in recognition, but the 2008 vintage was a cruel slap in the face that further threatened the region's reputation.

As reported by Thomas Ulrich in *Wines & Vines* (January 1, 2009), there were more than 800 lightning-caused fires in Mendocino County beginning the first day of summer in 2008. The timing could not have been worse, for this catastrophe was shortly after veraison, making the grape vines particularly susceptible to smoke taint. Compounding the smoke taint problem, winter frosts between February and April followed by spring and summer heat waves stressed the vines and limited yields. Drought challenged those vineyards that normally require irrigation and early rains threatened harvest as well.

Anderson Valley is classified as a Region I viticulture area in the lower or more northerly part of the valley, and Region II in the upper valley around Boonville. As a very cool winegrowing region, Anderson Valley is susceptible to spring frosts but the two weeks of daily frosts in April 2008 hit especially hard. Many veteran winegrowers said that it was the worst series of frost since the early 1970s. Pinot Noir, which is an early budding variety, is especially vulnerable to frost. Some vineyards in the Anderson Valley lost 80 percent or more of bud growth. The searing heat wave that followed in May further stressed the Pinot Noir vines which prefer gradual changes in temperature. Both frost and extreme heat kill the flowers on the young shoots that must be pollinated to develop into grapes.

As if the challenges of dealing with frost and heat were not enough, the wildfires compounded the vintage nightmares. The Australians have done the most research about the effect if smoke in vineyards, and several facts have emerge from their findings which were confirmed by the experience of vintners during the 2008 vintage in Anderson Valley. Grapevines absorb volatile phenolic compounds such as guaiacol and 4-methyl-guaiacol through the leaves, store the compounds in the stems and leaves, and transport the compounds to the skin of grapes (there are no smoke compounds contained within the pulp of the grape). The vulnerability of grapevines to smoke taint is highest in the period from seven days after veraison to harvest. Repeat exposure to smoke during the growing season has a cumulative effect. Smoke taint in wine creates aromas and flavors that are described as gamy, spicy, smoky, smoked meat, burnt, charred, ash, dirty, cigar box, charcoal, bacon, truffle, coffee, barbecue, campfire, medicinal, woody and burnt rubber. Increased ethanol concentrations have been observed as well. Fermentation and aging of wine can increase the concentration of smoke taint compounds in wine and longer macerations increase smoke taint. Small amounts of smoke taint are tolerable (toasted barrels often add a subtle smoke aroma and flavor to Pinot Noir), and are similar to the effects of oak aging, and present no threat to health. There appears to be no carryover effect on the grapes from vines exposed to heavy smoke from the previous year, boding well for the 2009 vintage, but growth and yields of vines decreases in the year following heavy exposure to smoke. Pinot Noir is more susceptible to smoke taint

than Chardonnay or Syrah. Fining and filtration may reduce smoke taint, but taint compounds persist and the process of fining and filtration may strip wine of desirable aromatic and flavor characters. The biggest concern of winemakers is that wines may seem fine when bottled, but can develop more noticeable smoke taint features as the wine ages.

I attended the recent Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival with some trepidation, knowing that the 2008 vintage wines were significantly affected by smoke taint. This year marked the 13th Annual Festival, held on a comfortably sunny weekend, May 14-16, 2010. The event began informally 17 years ago with winery open houses, but was formalized into a festival in 1997. The Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival has increased in popularity in conjunction with the meteoric rise in quality of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. This year's celebration was sold out with over 650 people in attendance and 40 wineries pouring their wines. This event is sponsored by the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association and is one of my favorite annual Pinot Noir festivals. I am easily seduced by the casual country fair atmosphere, the delectable local artisan foods, the warmth and passion of the local winegrowers and winemakers, the enthusiastic organizers, and the superb Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs.

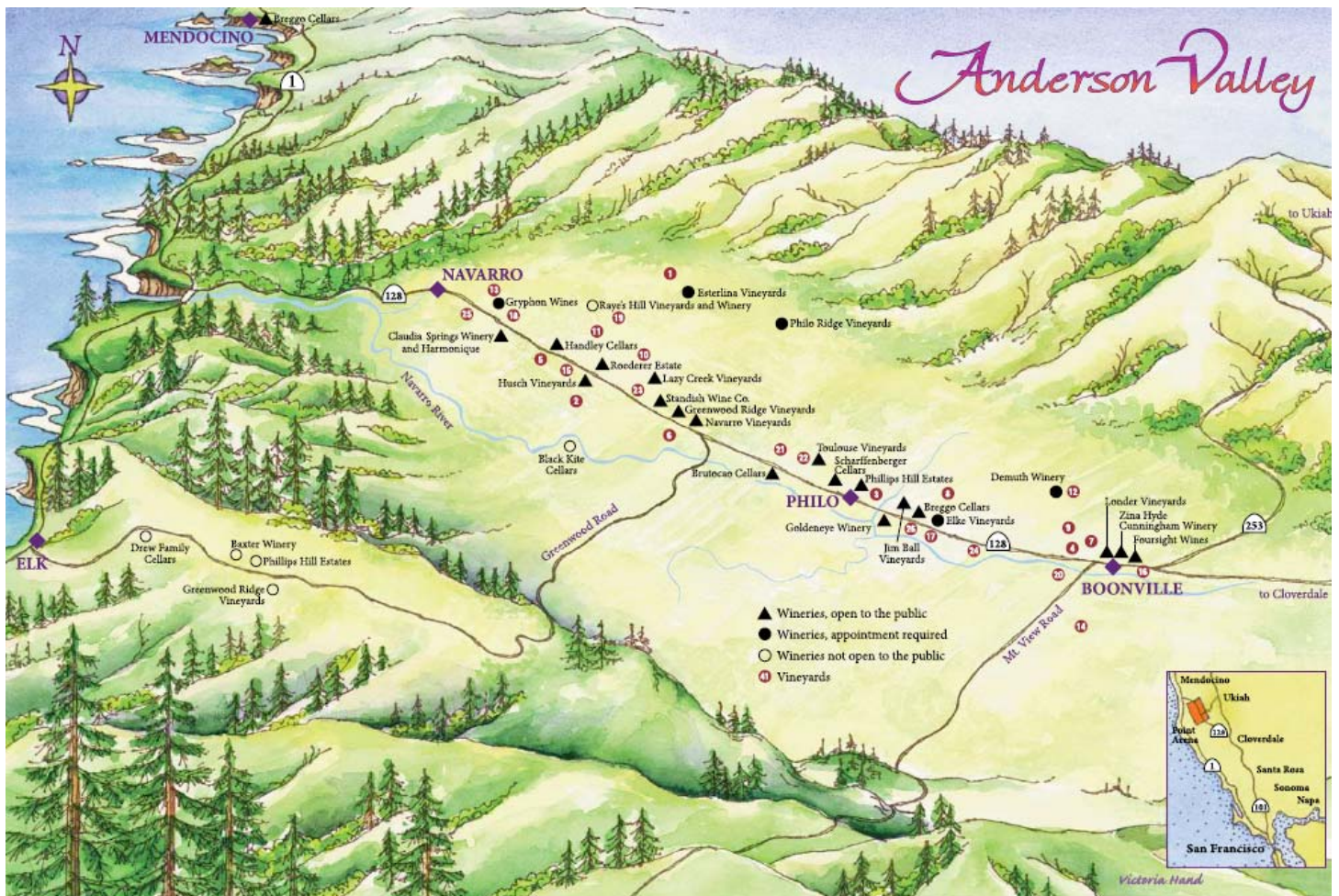


From an economic standpoint, the 2008 vintage was a disaster for Anderson Valley wineries. Over half of the grapes grown in the valley are Pinot Noir and this finicky grape was particularly affected by the calamities of the vintage. Anderson Valley wineries had three choices in 2008 in dealing with grapes exposed to wildfire smoke. Some chose to release no Pinot Noirs or to declassify the wine and sell it off in bulk. Producers such as Copain (bottled no 2008 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs), Londer (declassified 80% of production), and Littorai followed this tack (Ted Lemon chose to incorporate his Anderson Valley grapes in a rosé and in a Les Larmes cuvée that was vinified in a simple fashion to provide early drinkability and priced significantly less than the usual Littorai bottlings). Others employed various smoke taint reduction techniques such as carbon or resin filtration and reverse osmosis both of which tend to reduce the smoke taint but can strip the wine of its character. There is no current technology that can completely remove smoke taint. Producers who chose this tack included Breggo and Elke. Still others, such as Anthill Farms and LIOCO, who combined their vineyards into an Anderson Valley bottling, simply crafted the wine in the usual manner, acknowledging that the smoke influence was part of the vintage terroir. Phillips Hill flaunted this tack with its "Ring of Fire" bottling which boldly celebrated the smokiness of the Pinot Noir.

Over the course of the event, I tasted over fifteen 2008 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs from various producers and found them all unsatisfactory either due to smoke taint (untreated wines) or lacking in character ("stripped")

is the commonly used term) due to various smoke reduction treatments. My recommendation would be to cautiously approach the 2008 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs and taste before you buy. The wines may appeal to those of you who find a smoky quality to your liking. Some producers have reduced prices to make the 2008 wines more enticing. Several have yet to be released. Remember, many of the 2007 Pinot Noirs are still in the marketplace and are marvelous, and the 2009 vintage had an uncomplicated growing season resulting in a stellar vintage. The winemaking is quite accomplished now in the Anderson Valley but it is the soils and climate, the terroir if you will, that is so impressive here. As Dirk van der Niepoort said recently, "While 'good' wines are 50% terroir and 50% winemaking, 'great' wines owe far more to terroir."

Today, there are at least 25 wineries and more than 60 vineyards in the Anderson Valley. Some of the vineyard names have become household words to pinotphiles: Cerise, Demuth, Donnelly Creek, Ferrington, Hacienda Secoya, Hein Family, Klindt, Morning Dew Ranch, Savoy, Toulouse and Wiley. The major wineries include Claudia Springs Winery, Elke Vineyards, Goldeneye Winery, Handley Cellars, Husch Vineyards, Lazy Creek Vineyards, Londer Vineyards, Roederer Estate, Black Kite Cellars, Brutocao Cellars, Esterlina Vineyards, Foursight Wines, Greenwood Ridge Vineyards, Harmonique, Jim Ball Vineyards, Navarro Vineyards, Philo Ridge Vineyards, Raye's Hill Vineyards & Winery, Scharffenberger Cellars, Standish Wine Co., Toulouse Vineyards, and Zina Hyde Cunningham. Baxter Winery, Drew Wines and Phillips Hill Estates are located above the valley floor in Elk but considered part of the Anderson Valley winery lineup (refer to map below). Over 30 major California Pinot Noir producers outside the Anderson Valley access grapes from the Anderson Valley and nearby Mendocino Ridge AVA including Anthill Farms, Arista Winery, Adrian Fog, Barnett, Benovia, Brogan Cellars, Cakebread Cellars, Chronicle Wines, Copain Wines, Couloir Wines, Dain Wines, Expression 39, Ferrai-Carano Vineyards & Winery, Fulcrum Wines, Gryphon Wines, Hartford Family Wines, Harrington, Ici/ La-Bas, La Crema Winery, LIOCO, Littorai, MacPhail Family Wines, Radio-Coteau, Rhys, Roessler Cellars, Russian River Valley Wines, Saintsbury, Skewis, Tandem, Twomey, Waits-Mast Family Cellars, Whitcraft, Williams-Selyem and Woodenhead. Most Anderson Valley vineyards are less than 10 acres in size, with three large growers, Roederer Estate, Goldeneye, and Navarro, controlling most of the total acreage.



Before the Grand Tasting held on the grounds of the Goldeneye Estate, a private tasting was held for members of the press at the newly opened winery adjacent Gowan Creek Vineyard. I tasted all 33 wines submitted by the wineries, several of which were from the 2006 and 2007 vintages which I have reviewed previously. For contact or wine purchase information for each of the wineries, visit the Winery Directory on my website at www.princeofpinot.com or the Anderson Valley Winegrowers website at www.avwines.com



2007 Baxter Winery Toulouse Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.67, 250 cases, \$45. Released in the fall of 2009. This vineyard is located near Philo and was planted in 1998. Clones 115, 667 and 2A. Aged in neutral oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely outfitted nose featuring scents of red fruits including strawberries and cherries, rose petals and a hint of spice. Tasty core of delicately spiced redder fruits with a touch of underlying wet leaves and underbrush. Light in weight with bright acidity that lifts the vibrancy of the fruit. Very good.*



2008 Black Kite Stony Terrace Block Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., pH 3.60, 148 cases, \$52. Released in the spring of 2010. Aged 11 months in oak. Winemaker Jeff Gaffner. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, smoke and ash. Very pretty black raspberry and cherry fruit overshadowed by ash. Discreetly rich with fine grain tannins and a hint of heat on the finish. Some may find this wine to their liking if they prefer heavily toasted oak. Decent but hard to tout at this price.*

Note: I tasted the two other Pinot Noir releases from Black Kite at the Festival Grand Tasting, 'Kite's Rest' and 'Redwood Edge Block' (there was no Rivers Turn Block bottling in 2008 because this part of the vineyard was lost to frost in 2008) and re-tasted the Kite's Rest and Stony Terrace Block at home in my usual fashion. In each case, the wines were found to have a prominent and unpleasant ash character. These wines are for purists looking for wines reflecting the challenges of the vintage. Black Kite produced outstanding Pinot Noirs in the 2006 and 2007 vintages, so pinotphiles should not be dissuaded by the smoke tainted 2008 vintage in pursuing future vintages.

2008 Black Kite Kite's Rest Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 883 cases, \$42. A blend of Redwood's Edge and Stony Terrace vineyard blocks from the estate 12-acre vineyard in Anderson Valley's deep end. Clonal mix is Dijon 114, 115 and Pommard. *Noticeable cigar ash aromas overshadow the fruit. Heavy sweet smoke flavor obscures the ripe fruit core. Could not get past a sip or two. Unsatisfactory.*

2008 Black Kite Stony Terrace Block Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., pH 3.60, 148 cases, \$52. Released in the spring of 2010. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Dark fruited aromas and flavors with a grilled, charred wood and smoke character. Nicely composed with a rich dark berry and cherry core that sadly can't find proper expression. Decent.*

2008 Breggo Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.64, 476 cases, \$55. A blend of Martini 15, Dijon 115 and 667, Pommard and Calera selection. Aged 15 months in 65% new French oak. Winemaker Ryan Hodgins. *Smoky aromas initially which tend to dissipate revealing scents of cherry cola, dark berries and rose petals. Medium-bodied core of earth-kissed black cherry fruit which lacks the layered nuances so typical of this vineyard. One of the better smoke-tainted 2008s from Breggo, but I preferred the Donnelly Creek Vineyard bottling which was tasted casually at the event. Good.*

2007 Cakebread Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., pH 3.68, 1,500 cases, \$37. Released in the fall of 2009. Aged 15 months in 40% new French oak. Winemaker Julianne Laks. *Moderately deep color. Rich and penetrating aromas of dark red cherries and berries. Flavors of boysenberry and plum drive the fruit profile which is rich and mouth coating. Less oak influence than in 2006 for the better. Dry and staunch tannins enrobe the fruit and may soften with time, but this will always be a big-boned and tannic wine. Good.*



2007 Chronicle Wines Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

14.1% alc., 556 cases, \$55. Released in the spring 2010. Clones Wädenswil and Pommard. Aged 16 months in 50% new French oak. Winemaker Ted Lemon. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lovely perfume of red and black fruits and rose petals. Delicious and classy in every way with soft, ripe tannins, an appealing earthy bent to the dark fruit and a lengthy fruit-blessed finish. A polished wine of great charm.*



2007 Claudia Springs Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

14.4% alc., pH 3.59, 372 cases, \$28. To be released in the winter of 2010. Klindt Vineyard is at the extreme western end of the Anderson Valley. Planted in 1998 in heavy clay loam over fractured rock and consisting of 8.5 acres of Pinot Noir and 2 acres of Pinot Gris. 35% Pommard clones 4 and 5, 20% each Dijon clone 115 and 113, and small amounts of 667 and 777. Aged in 25% new French oak barrels. Winemaker Bob Klindt. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very charming cherry blossom fruit perfume with brown spice. Bright and juicy cherry bombast with gossamer tannins and admirable persistence on the finish. An impressively crafted and seductive wine, possessing a perfect balance of ripe fruit, vital acidity and refined tannins. Unbelievable quality at this price point. The best Pinot Noir I have every sampled from this top end Anderson Valley producer.*

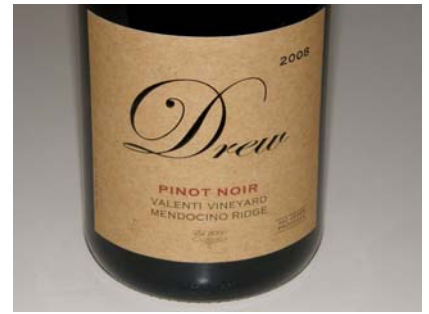


2007 Couloir Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

13.52% alc., pH 3.65, 200 cases, \$44. Released in the summer 2009. Planted in 1999 to Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777 by Duckhorn Vineyards, this vineyard was later bought by Chuck McBride who hired Paul Ardzrooni to manage the vineyard. Situated at the deep end of the Anderson Valley. Winemaker Jon Grant. *Moderately deep color and slightly cloudy (unfiltered). Nicely composed perfume of dark red berries, black cherries and spice box. Rich, plush and very satisfying with an impressive mid palate attack of ripe fruit leading to a finishing note of peppery spice and uplifting citrus vibrancy. A hedonistic fruit-driven style that will find fans. Very good.*



2008 Drew Wines Valenti Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.63, 362 cases, \$36. Released in the spring 2010. This vineyard is located at the top of Greenwood Ridge, 6 miles from the Pacific ocean and 1,300 feet above sea level. This is a challenging site with harsh conditions. 100% clone 667. 40% stems, 5% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 11 months in 30% new and 70% seasoned French oak barrels. Debut single-vineyard bottling. Winemaker Jason Drew. *I really like the nose on this wine which sports black cherry jam, redwood and exotic Asian spices. Earthy and slightly smoky in the mouth with savory black cherry and black raspberry fruit in the background. Restrained but evident tannins need time to resolve and the wine as a whole needs another year in the bottle to show what it has. Very good now but will get better.*



2007 Elke Vineyards Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.90, 740 cases, \$34. Released in the spring 2009. This vineyard is located just outside the town of Boonville and is planted to five clones of Pinot Noir. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *This wine has aged nicely in the bottle since tasted last year. Lovely oak-kissed berry fruit with a hint of barnyard. Savory dark red berry fruits are featured with a silky texture and a grip of tannin on the pleasing finish. Very good.*

Note: I tasted the 2008 Mary Elke Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$26) casually at the event. Mary told me the wine was treated with reverse osmosis to remove smoke taint. The process seemed quite successful for this wine was very pleasant with an easy drinking dose of cherry and cranberry flavors. Not an epiphany, but a well-priced daily drinker.



2007 Esterlina Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.56, 611 cases, \$45. Released in spring 2009. Aged 15 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *This beauty keeps opening and opening in the glass revealing a nuanced perfume of ripe strawberries, black raspberries, spice box and the faintest oak. Very tasty berry jam core veering to the red spectrum that drifts away on the finish with a whisper of persistent pheromone-inspired perfume. This wine could launch a very intimate evening among amorous adults.*



2007 Expression 39 Annahala Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 400 cases, \$48. Released in the fall 2009. This vineyard is located halfway between the towns of Boonville and Philo. Aged in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Appealing aromas of black cherries, plums and Moroccan spices. Ripely flavored plums and black currents with a hint of raisin and anise. Medium-bodied with supple tannins and a dry finish. Good.*





2007 Foursight Wines Clone 5 Charles Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 97 cases, \$49. Aged in 50% new French oak. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish-purple robe. Really great perfume of fresh cherry pie and baking spices which intensifies with swirling. Juicy core of plentiful cherry and raspberry fruit and a smoothly textured platform. The finish is outrageously persistent. The whole package and plenty of swagga to boot.*



2007 Goldeneye Winery Gowan Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, 990, \$55. Released March 2010. Planted to 8 clones of Pinot Noir tailored to specific sites and soils in the vineyard which is located on Highway 128 in the heart of the Anderson Valley. Aged 16 months in 97% new and 3% second vintage French oak barrels. *Deeply colored in the glass. Restrained aromas of dark cherries, berries and toasted oak lead to a plethora of fresh berry fruit offered in a hedonistic style that saturates the palate. A very tasty sipping wine that leaves a lasting impression of fruit on the lengthy finish. The high percentage of new oak is nicely integrated. Goldeneye Pinot Noirs are intended to make a statement and this one definitely accomplishes the goal. Very good.*



2007 Greenwood Ridge Vineyards Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.69, 875 cases, \$30. Released in the winter 2009. Aged 8 months in French oak barrels. Very cool etched bottle. *Brimming with black cherry essence in the aromas and flavors with a hint of mocha and savory herbs. The fruit really clings to the palate through the vibrant finish.*

Mild but well-structured tannins give the wine a presence. Year in and year out, one of the best values in Anderson Valley Pinot Noir, or any North American Pinot Noir for that matter. Highly recommended.





2007 Handley Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.55, 4,029 cases, \$30. Released in the fall 2009. Multiple vineyard sources (35% Estate Martini clone) throughout the Anderson Valley with 10% Potter Valley fruit. Aged 10 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Subdued but pleasing scent of ripe berry jam. Silky textured core of black cherry and berry fruit with a hint of savory herbs. A lively grip of acidity on the finish makes you yearn for another sip. Good, and a solid value.*

2006 Harmonique Elegancé Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.55, 675 cases, \$53. Released in the spring 2010. 7 clones from four vineyards in the Anderson Valley. Aged 17 months in 50% new and 50% seasoned French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color. Delicate aromas of cherries and rose petals. The name personifies this wine of finesse offering demure and lacy cherry and strawberry flavors with a nice touch of spice and vanilla. The tannins are supple and a bright tug of acidity lifts the finish. Very good.*

2007 Husch Estate Reserve Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 498 cases, \$35. Released in the spring 2010. Best lots in the cellar given special handling and extended aging. 25% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Very reserved nose which fails to respond to coaxing. Medium-bodied core of cherry cola and mocha flavors with a loamy underpinning. Tight and unyielding with little charm now. Good, but could receive more accolades with another couple of years in the cellar.*

Note: The WiAt home, I tasted two other Husch Pinot Noirs from the 2007 vintage which are reviewed below.



2007 Husch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$23. *Enticing aromas of black cherries, fig, Provencal herbs and oak. A cherry bombast of moderate weight. Slightly creamy and easy to drink with fine grain tannins and a refreshing acid tang on the short finish. Consistently one of the best under \$20 Pinot Noirs produced in California (full retail is \$23, but it is often discounted in the retail market to \$16.50-18.00). Good.*

2007 Husch Nash Mill Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 12 cases, \$40. This is a 4-acre vineyard in the hills above Husch. *Very subdued black cherry and dark berry aromas with a hint of toasted oak and mint. Very tasty and exotic featuring impressive mid palate richness. Deliciously vivid dark berry and red plum fruits are set off nicely by judicious use of oak and silky tannins. The flavors currently trump the aromas. Very good.*



2007 Jim Ball Vineyards “Signature” Label Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.65, 690 cases, \$45. Aged 9 months on the lees with monthly stirring in 33% new French oak barrels. *This bottle did not show as well as others I have sampled. Aromas of oak-infused black cherries carry over on the palate. Light, dilute and a little green. Decent.*

2007 Lazy Creek Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.45, 880 cases, \$38. Released in the fall 2009. Partial whole cluster fermentation. Aged 16 months in 30% new and 70% seasoned French oak barrels. *Medium dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Subdued aromas of black cherries, raspberries and underbrush. Rich, thick and sweet with sappy plum and boysenberry fruit. Good.*

2007 LIOCO Klindt Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.80, 265 cases, \$45. Released in the winter 2009. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Pommard co-fermented, partial whole cluster fermentation, aged 12 months in 1, 2 and 3-year-old French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Very appealing scent of gregariously spiced black cherries. Richly fruited but discreet, spotlighting black raspberry fruit. Very tasty, soft in the mouth with impeccable balance and a lively, lingering finish. The fruit really shows a vivid purity in this wine.*



2007 Londer Vineyards Estate Grown Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.95% alc., pH 3.74, 615 cases, \$48. Released in the spring 2010. From a 16-acre vineyard planted in clay loam soil in 2001 to five clones of Pinot Noir including Swan, Pommard, 115, 777 and 2A. Aged in 30% new French oak barrels. *Aromas of black cherries with a minty green note. A fruit-driven wine of moderate richness leaving a little warmth in its wake. A bit closed now and should reward a few years of cellaring. Decent.*

2008 Navarro Vineyards Deep End Blend Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.74, 1,125 cases, \$49. To be released in the summer 2010. Clones 115, 667 and 777. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Ripely fruited with prominent ash notes on the nose and palate. There is a core of pretty cherry and berry fruit lurking in the background but it can't compete with the smoke taint. Reflects the vintage. Decent.*



2008 Phillips Hill Estates Ring of Fire Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 150 cases, \$38. Released in the spring of 2010. Sourced from Corby and Toulouse vineyards. Clones 115, 667, 777, 2A and Pommard. Aged 11 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Egg white fined and unfiltered. *Light in color and fruit intensity with a smoky personality. Notes of cherries, forest floor and cigar ash. A barely serviceable wine. Unsatisfactory.*

Note: I also tasted the 2008 Phillips Hill Estates Beeson Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir at the event, and this wine was noticeably infused with a smoke and ash character.



2006 Philo Ridge Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 410 cases, \$19. Released February 2010. Sourced from Ferrington Vineyard. Aged 22 months in 50% new French oak barrels and bottle aged for 9 months. *Moderately intense reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is very floral with notes of forest floor and mint. An elegantly styled wine that is nicely flavored with cherries and spice. A value-play that tastes much better than it smells. Good.*



2006 Roederer Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.87, 397 cases, \$23. Released May 2007. Estate grapes. Clones 114, 115, 667, 777, Pommard and small amounts of other. 100% de-stemmed. Light filtration. Aged 10 months in 19% new French oak barrels. *Medium garnet color in the glass. A delicate wine with charming notes of red cherries and spice wrapped in gossamer tannins and possessing a lively finish. A daily drinker. Good.*

2005 Roessler Cellars Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.64, 250 cases, \$45. Released in the fall 2007. *This bottle is mildly oxidized showing an orange cast to the rim in the glass. Aromas of faded fruit and oak lead to similar flavors. An uninteresting and defective bottle. Unsatisfactory.*

2007 Saintsbury Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 1,150 cases, \$44.95. Released in the spring 2009. Cerise Vineyard is 37 acres on a 200-acre site just north of the town of Boonville. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Pommard. Aged 10 months in 24% new, 27% 1 and 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Charming aromas of black cherries, red and black berries and cocoa. Rich and fruity and very smoothly textured. An upfront pleasing style that wants for more complexity which will certainly come with more time in the bottle. Good.*



2005 Scharffenberger Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.76, 133 cases, \$23. Released in the spring of 2008. Sourced from Perkins-Clark and Redwood Grove vineyards. Clones 114, 115, 667 (55%), Pommard and 13 and 32. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 10 months in 18% new French oak barrels. Light filtration. *Alluring aromas of black cherries and sandalwood. A lighter style that is at its drinking peak showing flavorful notes of black cherries and raspberries with subtle and stylish spice in the background. An excellent value. Good.*



2007 Skewis Reserve Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.52, 150 cases, \$50. To be released in the fall 2010. Final release from the formerly named Floodgate Vineyard. Located at the far western end of the Anderson Valley exposing it to a strong maritime influence with frequent summer fog and wind. The soil is poor leading to low vine vigor. Winemaker Hank Skewis. *The classiest wine in this tasting with impressive long-term potential. Fruits are multi faceted with savory berries, black cherries and plum the most prominent. Notes of loamy earth and dark mocha add interest. The wine has a velvety smooth mouth feel with a well-proportioned tannic backbone for aging. A lithe and dancing Pinot.*

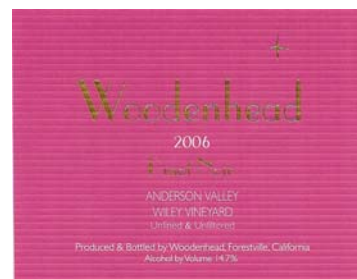


2006 Standish Wine Co. Mayflower Day Ranch Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.61% alc., pH 3.65, 47 cases, \$70. Released in the winter 2008. Aged 11 months in 90% new French oak. Unfined and filtered. The wine has an orange tinge to the rim in the glass. *Heavily oaked, rich and densely fruited, almost jammy. Very Caliesque in style. Decent.*

2008 Toulouse Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.89, 550 cases, \$50. *Moderately light in color. The nose is savory with notes of cherries, oak and a whiff of alcohol. Oak-kissed dilute fruit with a hint of root beer. No smoke notes but seems stripped. Decent.*

2008 Waits-Mast Family Cellars Hein Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 25 cases, \$44. Released in the fall 2009. Co-ferment of 115 and Pommard clones. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Black cherry and herbal highlights on the nose carry over onto the smooth palate with the slightest ash lurking in the background. Healthy tannins need time to integrate. Good.*

2006 Woodenhead Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.46, 358 cases, \$60. Released in the fall 2008. 26-year-old vines. Pommard 5 and Romanee-Conti 37 clones. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Polished cherry and stylish spice aromas. Delicious essence of fresh plums and black cherries with an underpinning of oak-driven root beer flavor with a potpourri of savory herbs. Impressive body and richness with nicely balanced tannins. Very good.*



There has been a number of tasting room openings in the Anderson Valley in the last two years. The following tasting rooms are now open (check website for hours): Breggo Cellars, Brutocoa Cellars, Claudia Springs Winery & Harmonique, Demuth Winery, Foursight Wines, Goldeneye Winery, Greenwood Ridge Vineyards, Handley Cellars, Husch Vineyards, Jim Ball Vineyards, Lazy Creek Vineyards, Londer Vineyards, Navarro Vineyards, Phillips Hill Estates, Roederer Estate, Scharffenberger Cellars, Standish Wine Co., Toulouse Vineyards and Zina Hyde Cunningham. All the tasting rooms are dotted along Highway 128 and within a 20 minute drive of each other. Eike Vineyards, Esterlina Vineyards, Philo Ridge Vineyards, and Raye's Hill Vineyards & Winery are open by appointment. If you plan to visit, check my Travel Directory at www.princeofpinot.com for lodging recommendations.

Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival Technical Conference

There were several interesting talks at this day long conference moderated by Jordan McKay, noted wine writer and author of *Passion for Pinot*.

*Veteran winemaker, Greg LaFollette (formerly Flowers Vineyard & Winery, Hartford Court, DeLoach, and consultant to many current labels such as Londer, Jim Ball Vineyards and Russian River Valley Vineyards, and winemaker for his own label, Tandem), gave a presentation titled, "How terroir, clones and winery techniques interact to affect mouthfeel." Although he did not answer the question proposed in the title per se, he offered a wealth of information on Pinot Noir clones. [Listen to his talk:](#)



*Jim Klein, long time winemaker at Navarro Vineyards offered three older vintages of Navarro Vineyards Pinot Noir and commentary about the winery and wines. Jim is admittedly not a fan of older California Pinot Noir and neither am I. That said, it is always interesting to sample old treasures. [Listen to his talk:](#)



1991 Navarro Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 20% whole cluster. 10% new oak. *Slight orange tinge to the rim. Moderately light in color. Hint of fig, soy and prune in the nose. Flavors of dried cherry skin, veering to the tart side. Still very decent, needing food to balance out the acidity.*

1994 Navarro Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 15% whole cluster. *Good color. Aromas of plums, earth and barnyard. Impressive dark stone fruit intensity with a sweet tone. Still enjoyable.*

2000 Navarro Anderson Valley Pinot Noir First vintage without whole cluster. 12% Savoy Vineyard fruit. *Quite enjoyable although slightly oxidized showing aromas of black currants, plums and mushrooms. On the palate, the fruit is slightly roasted with notes of brown spice and root beer.*

*The highlight of the conference was the Savoy Vineyard Focus Tasting with Rich Savoy, and winemakers Eric Sussman of Radio-Coteau, Mike Sullivan of Benovia and Scott Shapely of Roessler Cellars. Savoy Vineyard is one of Anderson Valley's most treasured vineyards and I have featured it in the *PinotFile* recently (Volume 8, Issue 9, www.princeofpinot.com/article/834/). [Listen to the panel discussion:](#) Photo below (L to R: Scott Shapely, Rich Savoy, Michael Sullivan, Eric Sussman).



2006 Benovia Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc.. 25% whole cluster, aged 17 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately intense dark and savory berries which are delicious. Lovely perfume of earth-kissed dark stone fruits and berries with a rich and satiny mouth feel. Very good.*

2007 Radio-Coteau Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc.. Whole cluster varies but 0% in this vintage. Aged 17 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *A big-boned, husky wine with plentiful tannin balanced by bright acidity. Earthy and dark fruited with underlying notes of tea and mushroom. Good.*

2006 Roessler Cellars Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. 25% whole cluster. Aged 11 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Gentle cross-flow filtration. Roessler has sourced from Savoy Vineyard since 2001 and Shapely has been the winemaker since 2006. *Moderate intensity with juicy dark stone fruits and berries and an underlying earthiness. Nicely composed and peaking now with a long, fruit-filled dry finish. Good.*

*Dan Sogg, consultant and former editor of *The Wine Spectator*, spoke on the merits and drawbacks of the 100-point wine scoring scale. My two thoughts at the conclusion of this discussion: (1) Instead of attaching yourself to a single high-scoring wine, grab on to a consistently accomplished producer, and (2) Producers decry the 100-point scoring system, but eagerly and unashamedly use scores to market their wines. [Listen to this talk:](#)

*The last talk had a commercial flavor with Tim Bucher and Kerry Damskey of TastingRoom and winemaker Julia Vazquez of DeLoach discussing a new marketing concept of using tiny bottles for wine sampling. TastingRoom.com is an online marketplace that allows consumers to try premium wines before they buy. Tasting kits from wineries such as Trefethen, Patz & Hall, Gundlach Bundschu, Talley, DeLoach and Grgich Hills composed of sample-sized (50ml) wines packaged in glass bottles are now available. Kits start at \$9.99 for a four-pack sampler and wine-tasting kits are shipped with special promotions and offers. The samples are bottled using new innovative technology which preserves the original flavor of the wine, replicating the taste and look of larger format bottles that the wine was originally transferred from. The idea is that you are tasting for a fraction of the cost exactly what you would if you bought the whole bottle. The small tasting bottle may prove very useful as well for winery sales representatives who are frequently on the road showing their wines. For further information, visit www.TastingRoom.com. Pictured below is a wine-tasting kit from DeLoach. [Listen to the presentation:](#)



Small Sips of Pinot

2007 Alysian Starr Ridge Vineyard East Terrace Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.44, 231 cases, \$55. This vineyard is owned and farmed by Gary and Debbie Farrell and consists of 23 acres planted to Dijon and Pommard clones. This wine is composed of Dijon 115 and Pommard 4 clones. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 14 months in 45% new French oak barrels. *Deeply colored. Beautiful black cherry fruit on the nose with Provencal herbs in the background. Vivid black cherry, raspberry and pomegranate flavors with a hint of iodine. A lively lift of acidity sparks the refreshing finish. Good.*

2007 Alysian Rochioli Vineyard Allen-Rochioli Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.40, 171 cases, \$65. Pommard 4 clone from Rochioli Vineyard and Allen Vineyard (farmed by Rochioli). 100% de-stemmed. Aged 14 months in 45% new French oak barrels. *Savory aromas of green herbs and cigar box with restrained fruit scents. Moderately rich but very tight, opening a little over time in the glass. Linear fruit flavors of cherries, berries and plums with a slight oak underpinning and a persistent citrus tang on the finish. I expect significantly more will be forthcoming from this wine with time in the bottle. Good.*



2007 Alysian Hallberg Vineyard Crossroads Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.41, 230 cases, \$55. Hallberg Vineyard is located in the Green Valley AVA. This vineyard was developed in 2000 by Kirk Lokka, a skilled viticulturist. Dijon clones 777 and 828. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 14 months in 45% new French oak barrels. *Shy dark stone fruit aromas emerge slowly in the glass offset by scents of oak and toasted brioche. With patient swirling, a tasty array of earth-infused blackberry and plum fruit emerges backed by a hint of lemon zest most evident on the crisp finish. A big-boned wine balanced nicely by lively acidity and very silky in the mouth. Tasted much better 8 hours later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.*



Note: All three of Gary Farrell's Alysian Pinot Noirs sampled are well-crafted, moderately rich wines with restrained tannins and good acidity. They should age quite well. Only released in the spring of 2010, I believe these wines need at least another year in bottle to begin to reveal their best side.

2008 Anthill Farms Tina Marie Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$46. This Green Valley vineyard is farmed by Ron Black and Stephen Bessone. *Aromas of green garden, green olive, and wild berries. Redder fruit is the focus with a green tea note underlying the fruit flavors. Zingy acidity brings up the finish which is a bit flat. Decent.*

2008 Anthill Farms Peters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$42. This vineyard has been farmed by Randy Peters and his father-in-law, Tom Mukaida, for over 20 years. A mix of Dijon 777 and Pommard clones. *Moderately light in color. Reserved aromas of dark red berries, tea and oak. Dilute and tart on the palate with spiced red cherry and red berry flavors. A lean wine that needs food. Good.*

2008 Anthill Farms Comptche Ridge Vineyard Mendocino County Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., \$42. From a remote and dry-farmed 2-acre vineyard north of Navarro managed organically by the Weir family. Exclusively Swan selection. Yields were only one ton per acre. *Darker fruits are featured on the nose with a heavy dose of toasted oak and a hint of smoke. Moderately intense core of black raspberry and plum fruit with a smoky undertone. The finish has a good grip of acidity and admirable persistence. Best of the three 2008 Anthill Farms Pinot Noirs tasted. Good.*



Note: I have been a big fan of Anthill Farms Pinot Noirs over the last few years but these three offerings from the 2008 vintage are disappointing and not up to par. Due to the problems with the 2008 vintage in Anderson Valley, grapes from the Abbey-Harris Vineyard and Demuth Vineyard were not up to their usual standards and were blended into a larger Anderson Valley bottling.

2008 Bruliam Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.64, \$52, sold out. Inaugural release from this new producer who donates 100% of profits from sales to a charitable foundation. 100% de-stemmed. Primarily Dijon clone 115 and Calera selection with smaller amounts of 667, 2A and Swan. Barreled as 70% free run juice and 30% press fraction. Aged 11 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding aromas of blackberries, ripe strawberries and a hint of oak sap and toast. A fruit-driven wine displaying charming and generous flavors of plums, dark berries and quince. Thick and bold, but not jammy, with supple tannins leaving a bit of heat in its wake on the finish. Very typical of Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir. Good.*

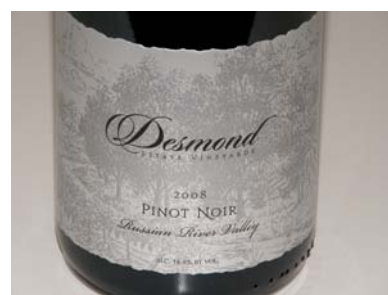


2005 Copeland Creek Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$30. From a vineyard adjacent Gap's Crown Vineyard in the Petaluma Gap. Last vintage for this wine crafted by Don Baumhefner. *Moderate color, veering toward the red spectrum. Delicate and pleasing aromas of strawberries, red cherries, sandalwood and oak spice with a cut flower scent developing with time in the glass. Tasty red fruits including cranberries. An elegant, food-friendly wine that is silky smooth and easy to drink. Still available from the producer. Very good.*

2007 Crinella Vineyards Estate Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$40. Winemaker is Rod Berglund of Joseph Swan Vineyards. *Moderately light in color. Aromas of dark cherries, raisins, sawdust and oak. Ripe, slightly roasted red fruit flavors that are on the lighter side enrobed by healthy tannins. Soft and clean but flavors don't excite. Decent.*



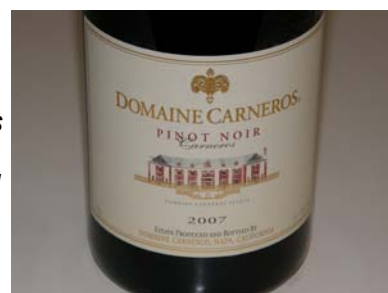
2007 Desmond Estate Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., pH 3.69, 80 cases, \$36. From an estate vineyard located on Starr Road planted to a blend of Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels. Winemaker is Bill Robbins whose background is in construction but decided a few years back to try his hand at winemaking. He sold his Harley to buy a tractor for his vineyard. *Darkly colored. Enticing perfume of Bing cherries, rose petals and spice. Richly satisfying on the palate with vibrant flavors of black cherries and black raspberries. Fine-grain tannins contribute to a satiny mouth feel and a respectable grip of acidity on the finish leaves a refreshing impression. Very good (+).*



2008 D&L Carinalli Vineyards Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$25. *Moderately light in color. Subdued aromas of cherries, alpine strawberries and pine pitch. Soft and light in style with ephemeral flavors of dried cherries and herbal oak. Decent.*



2007 Domaine Carneros Carneros Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.50, \$35. Estate produced and bottled. 100% de-stemmed, whole berry fermentation. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels. Winemaker TJ Evans. *Lovely perfume which explodes out of the glass offering aromas of black raspberries, black cherries, spice, anise and cedar. Medium-bodied black cherry core which is enhanced by notes of herbs, oak and earth. Beautifully proportioned and balanced, silky in the mouth, and very easy to drink. This wine will find wide appeal. Very good.*



2007 Freestone Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$55. Released January 2010. 100% estate grown from Pastorage, Quarter Moon and Ferguson Vineyards. Aged 15 months in 65% new and 35% seasoned French oak barrels. Winemakers Damian Parker and Theresa Heredia. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Remarkably enticing aromas of black cherry, berry, tea and spice box which build in intensity over time in the glass. Very tasty Moroccan spiced berry core with a saturating mid palate attack that carries over on the intense and lengthy finish. An admirable acid spine predicts longevity. A very classy wine for spice lovers.*





2007 Graton Ridge Cellars Estate Paul Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$36. A very charming wine with alluring aromas of Bing cherry and fresh-picked strawberries. Delectable and vivid red fruit with up front appeal. Accents of spice and cola add interest. Very RRVish. Juicy, smooth in the mouth and a perfect summer refreshment.

Red Sweepstakes winner at the 2010 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. This wine will find many fans.



2008 Hartford Court Fog Dance Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.69, 443 cases, \$55. Estate vineyard. Aged 11 months in 50% new French oak. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black raspberries, rose petals and oak char. Tasty flavors of berries, black cherries, graham, dark coffee and mocha. Smoothly textured and easy to drink. Too much oak-derived flavors for my taste. Good.

2007 J Vineyards & Winery Barrel 16 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.4% alc., pH 3.82, 300 cases, \$70. Released in October 2009. 16 special barrels chosen by the winemaker, George Bursick. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 12 months in 30% new French oak barrels and 3 additional months after blending. Nicely composed array of aromas including red berries and cherries, sassafras and oak spices. Wow!

Delicious berry melange nicely spiced with hints of mocha, sassafras and melon. Almost a spiced muffin flavor. A unique wine of modest intensity with a silky smooth texture, mild fine-grain tannins and admirable finesse. Decant if you pop the cork now. A special occasion Pinot Noir.

2009 J Vineyards & Winery California Pinot Gris 14.4% alc., pH 3.46, 20,000 cases, \$15, screw cap. Sourced from the Russian River Valley, Monterey County and the Sacramento River Delta region. Fermented in stainless steel tanks with no MLF. Winemaker George Bursick. Slight frizz upon pouring. Attractive aromas of tropical fruits, bananas, and lemon meringue tart. Bright and tasty with crisp flavors of yuzu, lemon curd, lychee, pear and pineapple. Very creamy in the mouth with a slightly tart finish. A superb food wine and the best example of Pinot Gris produced in California.



2007 Joseph Jewell Wines Appian Way Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.51, 50 cases, \$45. From a 2-acre vineyard planted to 60% 115, 20% 777, and 20% Pommard 4 and 5 clones. Goldridge sandy loam. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 14 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of spiced plums, cherries, and green herbs. An unusual bottling from the Russian River Valley offering flavors of red plums, cherry skins, pomegranate, and even white peaches with a hint of citrus and chocolate truffle. Delicate and zingy in style with a dry, tangy finish. Good.

2008 Lucky Star California Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$7.50, Diam closure. No, the price is not a misprint. Initially the aromas are quite charming featuring black cherries, raspberries and leather hide. With time in the glass the charm fades, and the wine becomes stinky with notes of pine pitch and weeds. Simple and direct, with flavors of black cherries, cola, strawberries, sassafras and an underlying vegetal vein. Definitely Pinot Noir and an exceptional value, although it will not excite Pinot aficionados. Decent.

2007 Olivia Brion Wild Horse Valley Heron Lake Vineyard Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 680 cases, \$37. John Neumeyer is the proprietor and D. Mahaffey is the winemaker. Wild Horse Valley is located in the mountains east of the town of Napa and is the coolest growing area in the Napa region. The vineyard was planted in 1980 and produced its first wine in 1985. Reserve wines are bottled under the Olivia Brion label beginning in 2003. Olivia Brion was a suffragette and descendent of a great French wine family. Her many paramours included Warren Harding, Paul Gauguin, and Charles Chaplin. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 14 months in 33% new French oak barrels. Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy initially, but opens with time in the glass. More savory than




fruity, with aromas of ripe, darker berry fruit, violets and the slightest hint of mint. An interesting wine driven by exotic spices, dark berry fruit and cola. The wine really shines with time in the glass, bringing together healthy tannins, zingy acidity, uplifting minerality and hearty fruit into a very enjoyable drink. This is one of those little known and little touted labels that surprises with a very unique and lovable Pinot Noir.

2008 Red Car Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$36. Deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely aromatic profile of dark fruits, cut flowers, toffee and herbs. The core of sweet dark stone fruits packs a wallop. Very tasty, smooth in the mouth, with soft tannins. Needs a big lamb chop. Currently, the most drinkable Pinot Noir in the 2008 Red Car lineup. Not as refined as the other 2008 Red Car wines but more giving. Very good (-).




2008 Red Car The Aphorist Bartolomei Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$60. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Opens reluctantly in the glass with coaxing revealing pleasing aromas of black raspberries, black cherries, Jolly Rancher reds and pine pitch. Pretty core of dark red berry, blueberry and pomegranate fruit with a sidecar of citrus. Zippered up like a tight corset. The tannins are restrained and there is respectable persistence on the fruit-filled finish. Very good.



 **2008 Red Car Heaven & Earth La Boheme Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., \$60. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy but very enticing perfume of wild strawberries, black cherries and exotic woods. Delicious attack of full-bodied and ripe strawberry, raspberry and cherry fruit glides to the finish. The most tannic of the Red Car wines in this vintage, but the tannins are slippery. Impressive juice that will benefit from another year or two in the cellar.



 **2008 Red Car Dreamland Platt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$60. Moderately deep color in the glass. Very shy initially, opening slowly to reveal lovely scents of plums, berries, sandalwood and spice. Very soft, even ephemeral, dark berry and plum fruit which lightly coats the mouth building to a big and lengthy finish. This wine seduces you slowly, finishing you off with a big and memorable climax.



Note: The 2008 Red Car vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs were released in April 2010. These are young puppies and very difficult to evaluate at this stage. These are amazingly fruited wines, all reluctantly offering hedonistic pleasure now. Definitely decant these wines if you choose to pop a cork now. Patience will be rewarded. I did not find any signs of smoke taint in the wines. The Red Car labels continue to be among the best in the business. Red Car is opening a tasting room this summer in Graton adjacent the Dutton-Goldfield tasting room at the corner of Graton Road and Highway 116. As for now, the wines are sold exclusively through an allocated mailing list.

2007 Three Sticks Winery Durrell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

14.7% alc., pH 3.60, 375 cases, \$55. The proprietor of Durrell Vineyard selects the finest blocks from the 125-acre vineyard to produce this wine. Clones 115 and 777. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Alluring perfume of red fruits, grapes and roasted nuts. The discreetly concentrated sweet red berry core has an underpinning of earthiness and smoky oak. Soft and velvety on the palate, this charmer flaunts Pinot's sensual side. A very Caliesque offering that will find many fans. Very good.*



2007 Twin Oaks Cellars La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir

14.2% alc., \$42. Proprietor and winemaker is Mark Weiner. *Starts off nicely with alluring aromas of black cherries and sage fading a bit over time in the glass. Bright and juicy with tasty flavors of dark cherries, plums and lavender. An enjoyable drink that is nicely balanced, soft in the mouth and easy to cozy up to. Very good.*



2007 Twin Oaks Cellars Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

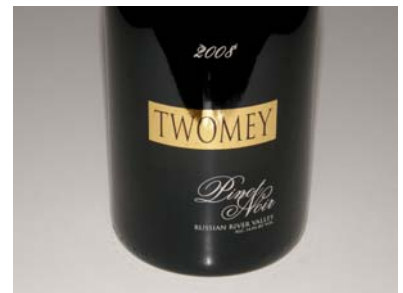
14.2% alc., \$42. *Aromas of ripe dark stone fruits, vanillin, green garden and fennel. Moderately rich flavors of black currants, cassis and cola with a hint of citrus peel on the crisp finish. Supple tannins and a silky mouth feel add to the appeal. Good.*

2008 Twomey Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc 13.9% alc., \$25, screw cap. Sourced primarily from the estate vineyard surrounding the Twomey winery on Dunaweal Lane just south of Calistoga. Very attractive stately clear bottle. *Clear color in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, eucalyptus, pineapple and banana. Flavors of golden apple, lemon, Kumquat zest and grass. A delicate wine that is bright with acidity yet slightly creamy on the palate. Put a little chill on this and take it along as a perfect summer picnic companion. Good.*

2008 Twomey Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.58, \$50. Sourced from four vineyards including McDougall Ranch, Putnam, Gap's Crown and Rodgers Creek. Whole clusters added to open-top fermenters. 7-day cold soak. Each clone was fermented separately. Aged 13 months on the lees in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of fresh wild berries and plum tart with a hint of smoke and sagebrush. Medium-weighted flavors of strawberries, raspberries and an underbody of citrus. A hint of smoke surfaces in the glass. Lacks mid palate impact and seems awkward, although it improves some in the glass indicating it will benefit from further aging in the bottle. Good.*

2008 Twomey Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.56, \$50. Sourced from Ferrington Vineyard, Savoy Vineyard and Monument Tree Vineyard. Whole clusters added to the open-top fermenters. 7-day cold soak. Clones were fermented separately. Juice rested on the skins 5 days post fermentation. Aged 6 months on the lees and 6 months off the lees in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light in color. Restrained aromas of red berries, cedar and barnyard. Light in body with flavors of strawberries, Red Vines, dried cherries and game. Supple tannins and easy drinkability but lacks interest. Good.*

2008 Twomey Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.62, \$50. Sourced from the estate West Pin Vineyard and Crinella Vineyard. Whole clusters were added to open top fermenters. Aged 13 months on the lees in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light in color. Aromas of black cherries, red hots and sawn oak. Tasty cherry cola core without much added nuance. Tannins are restrained and there is lively acidity on the bright finish. This wine is understated but charming. Very good.*




2008 Twomey Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., pH 3.57, \$50. Sourced from Bien Nacido Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley. Whole clusters added to open-top fermenters. 7-day cold soak. Post fermentation maceration. Aged 12 months on the lees in 40% new French oak barrels. *Scents of plums, underbrush and oak char. Middle weight flavors of dark fruits and blueberries with an earthy undertone. Pleasant and easy to drink with a silky mouth feel. Good.*

Note: The 2008 Twomey Pinot Noirs all show admirable finesse and balance. They are lighter-styled and appealing but somewhat generic. I would compare them to the Honda Civic automobile: well-made, likable, dependable, reliable, but lack excitement. I plan to re-taste the wines in 6 months.

2008 Waits-Mast Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 25 cases, \$44. Released April 2010. Clones 115, 667 and 777. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 12 months in 33% new French oak. *Unusual aromatics starting off with scents of wine cave and oak toast progressing to aromas of gingerbread and roasted tomato without any fruit evident. Tasty core of dark ripe cherries and cassis with a brown spice and roasted fruit tone. Smooth in the mouth with supple tannins. Big discrepancy between the nose and flavors may resolve with more time in the bottle. Decent.*

2007 Willowbrook JCO Limited Russian River Valley Estate Grown Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$25. is Joseph Otos. *Rich, showy berry jam aromas with the slightest oak initially fading a bit in the glass revealing more oak and oily pavement scents. Medium-bodied cherry and berry fruit which is slightly confected. A forward, easy drinking wine which is light on its feet offering a pleasing cherry cola note on the lingering finish. Good.*



 **2007 Woodenhead Humboldt County Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., \$40. Unfined and unfiltered. Last year from this source. *A fruity nose featuring fresh plums and boysenberries picking up intensity in the glass with oak dancing in and out along the way. Earth bound dark stone fruits with a wild quality. Nicely integrated oak with a hint of citric peel in the background. The tannins are well-structured and supple. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Humboldt County - who knew?*



2007 Woodenhead Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$40. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of oak-infused cherry and berry fruits. Tasty cherry and berry essence with cola and oak in the background. Elegant with soft tannins and easy drinkability. A nice little wine for daily drinking. Good.*

2007 Woodenhead Buena Tierra Vineyard Original Planting Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$57. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose needs some time to express itself, offering aromas of black cherries, spice box and herbs. Charming essence of cherries and saffras with a good dose of baking spice and juicy fruit flavors. This wine has a way of drawing you in to its charms. This bottle did not show quite as well as the one that won the Pinot Cup at this year's Pigs and Pinot event in Healdsburg. Very good.*



Pinot Briefs

Santa Barbara Futures The Wine House in Los Angeles has partnered with The Winehound to take over pre-arrival futures sales of Santa Barbara County wines (previously run by Doug Margerum). A large tasting was held in both Los Angeles and Santa Barbara recently so this information is a little stale. The online sale of small production lots, allocated selections and winery only cuvées from 54 wineries ends June 11, 2010. Join the offering list for next year by calling the Wine House at 310-479-3731 or e-mailing wine@winehouse.com.

Noble Pig A very cool food blog run by Noble Pig Vineyard & Wines in McMinnville, Oregon. The blog has a good dose of humor (“Gluttony is my sin of choice.”), food photography that will make you drool, useful information about wine (latest post is on cooking with alcohol), and a plentitude of very good ideas for entertaining. Check it out at www.noblepig.com.



IPNC Northwest Salmon Bake at White House Picnic Long time guest chef and board member of Oregon’s International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC), Jason Stoller Smith, was invited to recreate the Pacific Northwest Salmon Bake on the White House lawn on June 6. The Northwest Salmon Bake is a long-standing tradition of the IPNC, based on a Native American practice of roasting wild salmon on alder stakes over a large fire pit. The IPNC Salmon Bake will take place on Saturday, July 24, 2010, as a part of the 24th Annual IPNC in McMinnville, Oregon. A limited number of tickets are sold for the IPNC Salmon Bake only, but the dinner is included in the Full Weekend Tickets. Visit www.ipnc.org for information and tickets.



English/Spanish Dictionary for Wine Industry Josefina Adriance, M.A., has published an English/Spanish dictionary aimed at employees of the wine industry. The wine business has a vocabulary all its own and those who need to translate between Spanish and English may find it challenging to find the right word for “malolactic fermentation,” or “punching the cap.” Adriance is a native Spanish teacher who lives in the Napa Valley. She is the author of *Spanish for the Wine Industry*, a textbook she uses in business classes she teaches. The new dictionary provides more than 6,000 words including translations for glassy-winged sharpshooter (*chicharrita de alas cristalinas*), pump over (*remontar*), and sulfur dioxide (*bioxido de azufre*). The *English/Spanish Dictionary for the Wine Industry* is available for \$18 through Adriance’s Napa-based company, Spanish for Business, P.O. Box 502, Napa, CA 94559. Phone 707-257-1809, visit www.SpanishforWine.com, or e-mail Spanish4Business@aol.com.

China to Import Oregon Wine According to the *Portland Business Journal* (May 24, 2010), Oregon officials have signed an agreement with the Hong Kong Commerce and Economic Development Bureau to promote Oregon wine sales in China. Washington also signed the agreement. Hong Kong stopped import taxes on wine in 2008 and has arrangements in place with mainland China to import wine there.

QR Technology Now Appearing on Wine Labels QR (quick response) technology label-based two-dimensional bar codes can be captured with a mobile phone and take the consumer directly to the winery's website. This tool has been in widespread use in Asia since the mid 1990s on music products. The codes provide a way to connect the offline and online worlds and give wineries the opportunity to offer consumers the latest information about their wines and winery without having to update back labels. The code can also be linked to other content. New Zealand's new label, Insight, from Marlborough, uses the technology. Portuguese wineries have also adopted the QR bar codes. Several articles have been published on this technology including www.seriousaboutwine.co.za.

Amisfield Pinot Noir The 2008 vintage of Amisfield Central Otago Pinot Noir won a Gold Medal at the International Wine Challenge at the London International Wine Fair, and received the highest points (93) ever awarded a Central Otago Pinot Noir by the *Wine Spectator*. Visit www.amisfield.co.nz.

Healdsburg This Summer Hotel Healdsburg is offering Summer Packages that include guided vineyard walking tours in the Dry Creek Valley, kayaking or canoeing down the Russian River, sip and cycle bicycle touring, and rides through the vineyards, mountains and valleys by Vespa on a guided tour. The hotel's restaurant, Dry Creek Kitchen, hosts the Sonoma County Wine Pioneers Series on Saturday afternoons where different winemakers host interactive seminars and tastings. Featured winemakers include Eric Sussman of Radio-Coteau, James Hall of Patz & Hall Winery, Fred Scherrer of Scherrer Winery, George Bursick of J Vineyards & Winery, and Bob Iantosca of Gloria Ferrer. The nearby Relish Culinary School offers hands on and demonstration classes highlighting the best of summer ingredients. The 11th Annual Healdsburg Jazz Festival is June 4-13, 2010. Visit www.hotelhealdsburg.com.

iPhone Apps for Wine Tasting TastingRoom Finder was developed by World of Wine Events. The guide allows wine visitors to find tasting rooms, obtain directions to each tasting room, and use direct dial phone numbers for information. Available at the App Store for \$4.99. My Wine Trail Guide offers accurate GPS location of more than 3,700 tasting rooms in the United States with comprehensive tasting room information. Available at the App Store for \$2.99.

Benziger Family Winery Promotion Winemaker Rodrigo Soto has been promoted to Vice President of Winemaking including management of the certified organic and biodynamic Signaterra and de Coelo labels. I recently spent an afternoon with Soto, who has been at Benziger since 2006, as we walked the winery's Sonoma Coast vineyard and tasted a number of the latest wines. Look for my report in an upcoming issue.



Wally's Central Coast Wine & Food Celebration For Pinot lovers who live in Southern California, this event is a highlight of the summer season. Taste nearly 150 of the Central Coast's finest wines and savor signature dishes from renowned Los Angeles restaurants including Comme Ca, Lucques, A.O.C., Spago Beverly Hills, CUT, Osteria & Pizzeria Mozza, The Hungry Cat, and Jar as well as Central Coast favorites The Hitching Post, The Ballard Inn Restaurant and Brothers' Restaurant at Mattei's Tavern. A silent auction includes special winemaker-led tours, tastings, lunches and dinners. Live music by the Gary Burk Blues Band. All profits go to The Michael Bonaccorsi Scholarship Fund at the University of California at Davis Department of Enology. Over \$300,000 has been raised to date for this Fund, most of it from this event now in its seventh year. For tickets, visit www.wallywine.com or phone 310-475-0606.

Perfect Pairings for Pinot You May Not Have Thought Of California Pinot Noir and Doritos. Rosé Champagne with wasabi peanuts. California Pinot Noir paired with grilled halibut with tomato butter. A Blanc de Noirs Champagne and a good burger, especially one with applewood-smoked bacon, caramelized onions, and sauteed mushrooms (think Carl's portabello mushroom burger).

Pinot Noir: Fashion or Fad An article written by Misha Wilkinson on New Zealand Pinot Noir is getting quite a bit of buzz on the internet. Wilkinson owns Misha's Vineyard Wines in Central Otago. She reports that Pinot Noir is now the second most exported variety in New Zealand (5.4% of total export volume compared to 82% for Sauvignon Blanc). At the recent Pinot Noir 2010 event in Wellington, speakers lamented the fact that it will take a "huge effort" to familiarize Americans with New Zealand Pinot Noir. New Zealand's best market appears to be the UK because the British press already loves New Zealand Pinot Noir. Read the whole article at <http://www.mishasvineyard.com/pinot-noir-fashion-or-fad/>.



Mutineer Magazine

I came across this beverage magazine last year and was taken by the irreverent and humorous, yet informative and sophisticated approach to fine beverage enjoyment. A well-designed, eye-catching web site and accompanying blog completes the company's media approach. The magazine, now in its second year, is directed at the millennial consumer but even a well-aged wine lover like myself can indulge in this publication. Recently *Mutineer* sponsored a "Single Night" event in Sonoma County at C. Donatielli Winery which was a big success.

Mutineer Magazine held its 2nd Annual Red Carpet Tasting at the Falcon Hollywood on May 23, 2010, benefiting A Child's Right Charity. A variety of wines, craft beers, spirits, liqueurs, and non-alcoholic libations were poured along with the premier of the "Art of the Mutineer, Volume No. 1" photography exhibition that highlighted *Mutineer* Directory of Photography Ian Andrea's stunning photographs that have appeared in the publication since its inception.

Check out the *Mutineer* website at www.mutineermagazine.com. Yearly subscriptions to the print magazine are only \$14.99. The latest issue features a fascinating interview with Jonathan Goldsmith, "The Most interesting Man in The World," and coverage of a trip to California's Calaveras County wine region.