



# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no  
Noir, you Pinot  
Noir*

## 2014 12th Annual Pinot Noir Summit

The Pinot Noir Summit is the culmination of the Pinot Noir Shootout that involves three months of tasting of submitted wines by an esteemed panel of judges that includes 46 wine writers, sommeliers, wine retailers, winemakers, wine educators, wine bloggers and wine consultants. 447 Pinot Noirs from all over the globe were reviewed in a manner conducive to careful and thorough wine evaluation: only 32 wines were tasted by a judging panel on any given day. The wines are tasted completely blind without reference to region, vintage or price. Each wine was tasted at least twice. This judging is one of the most comprehensive and focused tastings of Pinot Noir in the United States.

The final 44 wines chosen for the Grands Awards Tasting were presented to the public for blind judging on March 9, 2014, at The Officers Club in The Presidio in San Francisco. The favorites of the judges and the consumers were tallied separately for men and women and awards were given for the top 3 in each category: Male Judges, Female Judges, Male Consumers, and Female Consumers. This award breakdown into male and female preferences is truly unique to this competition.



As a participant in this event for several years, and the Competition Director this year, I have consistently observed male and female preferences, either judges or consumer groups, rarely coincide. There is surprisingly little research on this difference between the sexes.

In 2012, Lettie Teague published an article in *The Wall Street Journal* titled "Men Are From Cab, Women Are From Moscato?" She related the views of sensory psychologist Marcia Pelchat of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia who said that women are more sensitive to bitter flavors than men and they prefer slightly sweet wines (although that is apparently not true with female wine professionals). Women are often given credit for genetically having better aroma sensitivity and "better palates," but there is little agreement on this matter.

An Australian study reported in the *Journal of Consumer Marketing* in 2011, found that specific differences exist in the sensory preferences of males and females as well as between generational cohorts, specifically Millennial and older consumers. The women in the study preferred white wine, a sweeter wine style at a young age, and a medium body style wine over light and full-bodied wines. Fruit tastes and aromas were most important, especially among females, while males preferred the aged characters of wine. Males are more receptive to tannic wines. My experience indicates that most women prefer Chardonnay with Pinot Noir second, while men most often reach for bigger reds such as Cabernet Sauvignon.

The observed differences in wine preference between professional tasters and consumers is more straightforward. Professional judges are more critical, focusing on technical aspects of wine balance and quality as well as acutely aware of minor flaws when judging, while consumers base their preferences on a simpler evaluation that boils down to whether they like the wine or not. Judges consider appearance, aroma, acidity, body, texture, tannins, astringency, quality and length of finish and so forth, while consumers decide what they like. It is troublesome to think that the wines that professional critics prefer are not the same as the wines that consumers necessarily want to drink!

The Pinot Noir Summit is produced by Chief Wine Evangelist, Barbara Drady and Affairs of the Vine, a Sonoma-based company dedicated to converting people to wine. The complete results of the 12th Annual Pinot Noir Summit are posted on the Affairs of the Vine website at [www.affairsofthevine.com](http://www.affairsofthevine.com). The results include separate comments about the wines by the male and female judges. Each year there are surprises, with a number of wines deemed outstanding that are submitted by wineries that are relatively unknown to the expert judges. Here are the results for Pinot Noir.

#### Male Judges

First Place: **2011 Bouchaine Estate Terraces Napa-Carneros Pinot Noir** \$60

Second Place: **2010 Holman Ranch Vineyards & Winery Hunter's Cuvée Carmel Valley Pinot Noir** \$40

Third Place: **2011 Comanche Cellars CharEva Vineyard Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir** \$30

#### Female Judges

First Place: **2010 Handley Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** \$32

Second Place: **2011 Anderson Oaks Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** \$30

Third Place: **2011 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Pinot Noir** \$28

#### Male Consumers

First Place: **2010 Asuncion Ridge Vineyards Estate Central Coast Pinot Noir** \$38

Second Place: **2012 The Winery SF North Coast Pinot Noir** \$38

Third Place: **2012 Thralls Roma's Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** \$42

## Female Consumers

First Place: **2010 Canihan Exuberance Canihan Family Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** \$65

Second Place: **2011 Gallegos Boekenooogen Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** \$38

Third Place: **2011 Anderson Oaks Vineyard Jamboree Estate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** \$30



There were also Pinot Noirs that the male and female judges deemed a “Bang for Your Buck.” Several of these wines were preferred by both men and women expert judges. Those receiving a cumulative score of 89 or above:

## Male Judges

**2012 Lucas & Lewellen Estate Vineyards Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** \$20

**2012 Mud House Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir** \$16.99

**2012 Canihan Canihan Family Vineyard Rose of Pinot Noir** \$20

**2012 Cline Cool Climate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** \$14.99

**2011 Jekel Monterey Pinot Noir** \$18.99

**2012 Pedroncelli Signature Selection Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** \$20

Female Judges

**2012 Cline Cool Climate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$20**  
**2012 Bonterra Mendocino Pinot Noir \$15.99**  
**2012 Pedroncelli Signature Selection Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$20**  
**2012 Baus Family Vineyards Sonoma County Pinot Noir \$20**  
**2012 Canihan Canihan Family Vineyard Rose of Pinot Noir \$20**  
**2011 Jekel Monterey Pinot Noir \$18.99**  
**2012 Mud House Central Otago Pinot Noir \$16.99**  
**2012 Pleasures California Pinot Noir \$10**

The wines that I judged exceptional among the final 44 Pinot Noirs:

**2012 TR Elliott Questa Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$44**  
**2010 Handley Cellars RSM Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$52**  
**2010 Canihan Canihan Family Vineyard Exuberance Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$65**  
**2011 Gallegos Boekenooogen Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$38**  
**2010 & 2011 Comanche Cellars CharEva Vineyard Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir \$30**  
**2011 EnGarde Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

\*Photos courtesy of Rosina Wilson, [www.drinkwinewithdinner.com](http://www.drinkwinewithdinner.com).

# Sips of Recently Tasted California Pinot Noir

I am keeping this issue brief as I am traveling the Pinot Trail quite a bit this time of year. I did want to get out the word on some luscious Pinot Noir I recently tasted while it is still available in the pipeline. The next issue will be devoted entirely to 2011 and 2012 Oregon Pinot Noir.

**Ancient Oak Cellars** Henry Siebert planted vines on the eastern side of the Russian River Valley when he was 80 years old. Ken Moholt-Siebert helped plant it and together with Melissa Moholt-Siebert they farm the Siebert Ranch, 31 acres of Pommard 4 clone. Arnulfo Becerra assisted in the initial planting and continues to tend the vines. A large, over 100-year-old ancient oak marks the center of the property, and provided the inspiration for the name of the winery which was launched in 2006. Ancient Oak Cellars produces Pinot Noir from the Siebert Vineyard and several other small, sustainably farmed family vineyards in the Russian River Valley. A second value-priced label, 47 Friends, offers a Sonoma County blend Pinot Noir. The winemaker is Kent Barthman whose winemaking background includes stints at Rutherford Hill, Taft Street, Carey Cellars, and Far Niente. Visit [www.ancientoakcellars.com](http://www.ancientoakcellars.com).

**2011 Ancient Oak Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.63, 900 cases, \$28. Sourced from estate vineyard and small sustainably-farmed family vineyards. Whole berry fermented, aged in 25% new French oak. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, dried herbs and balsam. Sweet and sappy cherry and red currant core with a hint of spice. Well integrated oak and bright acidity on the cherry-themed finish.* **89.**

**2011 Ancient Oak Cellars Siebert Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.61, 300 cases, \$40. Pommard 4 clone from hillside Block 5, aged for more than 18 months in 35% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Invigorating aromas of fresh cherry pie, strawberry preserves and Asian spice. Beautifully composed with bright flavors of perfectly ripened cherries and strawberries. Harmonious and vibrant with modest tannins, welcoming finesse and easy drink ability. Still singing the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **92.**



**2011 Forty-Seven Friends Sonoma County Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.57, 1,700 cases, \$20. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and raspberry are duplicated on the palate with accents of cola and herbal oak. Silky, with modest tannins, but a bit shallow on the mid palate. More oak surfaces over time in the glass.* **86.**

**Carol Shelton Wines** Carol Shelton is often cited as the most awarded winemaker in the United States. Her career began at the age of six when her mother developed an “identify the scent” game for her and her older siblings using household herbs and spices. It was the beginning of Carol’s path into the wine industry for she quickly became adept at figuring out new smells as the game evolved. Although she entered University of California at Davis with a penchant for poetry, she came upon her life’s calling when she first entered a wine cellar and was enthralled by the aroma of wine aging in oak barrels. Under the tutelage of Ann Noble, the author of the Aroma Wheel, she threw herself into enology studies. One of her projects on yeast strains proved that different strains produce different flavor characteristics in wine.

After graduating, Carol worked with industry giants like Andre Tchelistcheff and Robert Mondavi. In 1981, she began working at Windsor Vineyards where she spent 19 years crafting 45 different wines each year. She became a fan of Zinfandel and a board member of ZAP. As the new millennium began, Carol and her husband Mitch Mackenzie, launched their own brand, Carol Shelton Wines in Santa Rosa with a focus on Zinfandel. Among her 5,000 annual case production, she draws on years of winemaking experience to include a superb Pinot Noir in her portfolio. She calls the wine a “Zin-lover’s Pinot” as it has more fruit than many Pinot Noirs. Visit [www.carolshelton.com](http://www.carolshelton.com).

**2012 Carol Shelton Larson Vineyard Sonoma-Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.75, 382 cases, \$38. Released May 1, 2014. Larson Vineyard is owned by Carol's friend and fellow home brewer, Ken Larson. Harvest Brix 25.8°. 60% 115 and 40% 667. 3% Petite Sirah. Fermented in T-bins with 4 different yeasts. Aged 10 months in 10% new and 90% 1-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple hue in the glass. The nose draws you in with appealing aromas of black cherry tart, blueberry, graham and toast. Mid to full-bodied spiced black cherry core that attacks the mid palate with intensity, persisting on the robust finish. An oak sheen is evident in the background initially but tends to diminish with swirling. The wine picks up interest and nuance over time in the glass; always a good sign. Thoroughly enjoyable now with the balance to hold or improve over the next 5 to 7 years.* **91.**



**Donum Estate** The four estate grown Pinot Noirs reviewed here include the inaugural release of a Anderson Valley Pinot Noir from Angel Camp Vineyard. Winemaker Dan Gustafson told me that 2011 was a challenging vintage at the Donum Estate in Sonoma Carneros. Cool temperatures prevailed throughout the growing season and there was plenty of rain through June. Flowering was three weeks late and disrupted by rain, reducing crop size by 10% to 30%. Below normal temperatures continued through summer leading to extended hang time. Rains came again at September's end, playing a minor or major role in the vintage depending on location.

All lots from the Carneros Home Ranch were declassified except for two blocks, 290 (typically the base for the estate blend) and 490 (with a sub-block the source of West Slope). The 2011 Estate Grown Carneros blend is a selection of only the ten best barrels from each of the two blocks. The Carneros crus, East Slope and West Slope, were not produced in 2011. The wines are sold primarily through a mailing list. Visit the website at [www.thedonumestate.com](http://www.thedonumestate.com).

**2011 Donum Estate Grown Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.92, TA 0.54, 312 cases, \$72. 9 clones and selections planted in volcanic, sandy soils on a 500-foot knoll in the "deep end" of the Anderson Valley (Angel Camp Vineyard). A blend of 115, 667 and 777, Wädenswil, and David Bruce and Swan selections. 1-week cold soak, two fermentations with Dijon clones in one and other selections in the second resulting in close to a 50/50 blend. Best barrel selection before bottling. Aged in 54% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, blackberry, root beer and oak vanillin. Full-bodied and structured with deep, dark and dense blackberry and black raspberry flavors with a hint of cola. The flavors tiptoe to the edge of ripeness but fall short of going over the edge. Slightly impenetrable and needing more time in bottle.* **91.**

**2011 Donum Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.55, 479 cases, \$72. 100% Donum Roederer clone from two blocks. Aged in 55% new Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of fresh cherry pie, exotic spices and toasty oak. Mid to full-bodied, delicious flavors of dark cherry and boysenberry with a hint of sandalwood in the background. Refined and polished with well-managed tannins, finishing with agreeable vigor.* **92.**

**2011 Donum Estate Grown Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.59, 499 cases, \$72. Equal parts 115 and 667. 5-day cold soak, aged 16 months in 80% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple hue in the glass. A striking wine with bright aromas of Bing cherry, teal leaves, cola and spice. The luscious cherry core is mouth filling and lasts and lasts on the generous finish. Silky in texture, with modest tannins and complimentary oak in the background.* **91.**

**2011 Donum Estate Grown Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.59, 343 cases, \$90. A selection of 14 barrels of Dijon 667 clone. Long cold soak, aged 18 months in 71% new French oak. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Deep aromas of black cherry, sassafras and cedary oak. Very polished and lush on the palate, with a sappy core of Bing cherry fruit accented with sassafras, cola and brown spices. A nice touch of oak adds interest and the refined tannins bring softness. The most striking feature of this wine is the finish which is flamboyant and very persistent. Tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the finish remained striking.* **93.**



**El Molino** One of the first wineries in the Napa Valley, it operated until Prohibition and was restored in 1981. The 66-acre estate Star Vineyard, planted in 1978 to Chardonnay and 1991 to Pinot Noir, is located in a unique microclimate ideal for growing Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Each year the Pinot Noirs are outstanding, truly reflecting the unique terroir. Visit [www.elmolinowinery.com](http://www.elmolinowinery.com).

**2011 El Molino Rutherford Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 625 cases, \$65. Released April 1, 2014. Very light yields in this vintage. harvest Brix 21.8°-25.7°. Clones 777, 115, 113, DRC, Bouzeron, Pommard 5, Calera, Chalone and Swan. 75% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation, basket pressed, and aged in 70% new Francois Frères oak. Aged 11 months sur lie before being racked and blended, then aged another 6 months in oak. Bottle aged for 12 months before release. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. This is a cherry-driven wine of much charm and gracious appeal. There are accents of strawberry, balsam, spice, and saffras with a subtle oak undertone. The tannins are modest and refined, the mouth feel is smooth and polished, and the finish has respectable length. A very elegant offering in this cool vintage. 92.*

**Ferrari-Carano** In 2006, the Caranos began a search for land that would produce superior Pinot Noir grapes. That search led them to Mendocino County, where, in 2007, they bought their first Pinot Noir vineyard in the AVA known as Mendocino Ridge. This property had been the site of a commune called The Rainbow Enterprise that was supported by growing marijuana. Ferrari-Carano renamed the Hayward Ranch appropriately "Sky High." In May 2008, they bought Lazy Creek Vineyards in the Anderson Valley from Josh Chandler. Since then, they have continued to develop the surrounding 95 acres to solely Pinot Noir and have built a 10,000-square-foot winery and adjacent 760-barrel underground cave that was completed in 2011. The winery is designed for small scale Pinot Noir production. Also in 2008, they bought an existing vineyard in Anderson Valley on Middleridge mountain range known as the Ball Vineyard. This is a 160-acre ranch, of which only 30 acres are planted to Swan, Calera, Pommard, and various other heritage clones/selections. Since 2004, Ferrari-Carano has produced very small amounts of Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley area, but failing to find readily available properties in the Russian River Valley AVA, they set their sights on Anderson Valley where they feel superior Pinot Noir is grown. The latest collection of Ferrari-Carano Pinot Noirs are impressive and reflect a serious commitment to ultra-premium quality production. Visit the website at [www.ferrari-carano.com](http://www.ferrari-carano.com).



**2012 Ferrari-Carano Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.73, TA 0.57, 1,752 cases, \$34. Released March 2014. A new bottling from three estate ranches in the Anderson Valley. 100% de-stemmed, 2-3-day cold soak, fermented in small bins and open-top fermenters. Various yeast strains were introduced and the fermenters were punched down 1 to 3 times a day. Aged 10 months in 45% new and 55% older French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers an array of aromatic delights including black cherry, red plum, raspberry and pie spice. The flavors echo the aromas with an added hint of bark and cola. The mouth feel is polished, and there is some respectable finishing persistence. Solid. 89.*



**2012 Ferrari-Carano Middleridge Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.79, TA 0.59, 497 cases, \$55. Release summer 2014. 22 acres of Pinot Noir planted at 1,600 feet elevation planted to Swan and Calera selections. 100% de-stemmed, 2-3 day cold soak, aged 10 months in 48% new and 52% older French oak barrels. Planned release later part of 2014. *Moderately dark reddish purple hue in the glass. An aromatic feast of fresh cherry, warm baking spices, sandalwood and a touch of grilled mushrooms and beef stew. Mid to full-bodied flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and spice are enticing, supported by gentle, submerged tannins. The generous fruit sap floods the mid palate with enjoyment, holding fort as well on the amazing peacock finish. Balance is impeccable. 94.*



### **2012 Ferrari-Carano Sky High Ranch Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir**

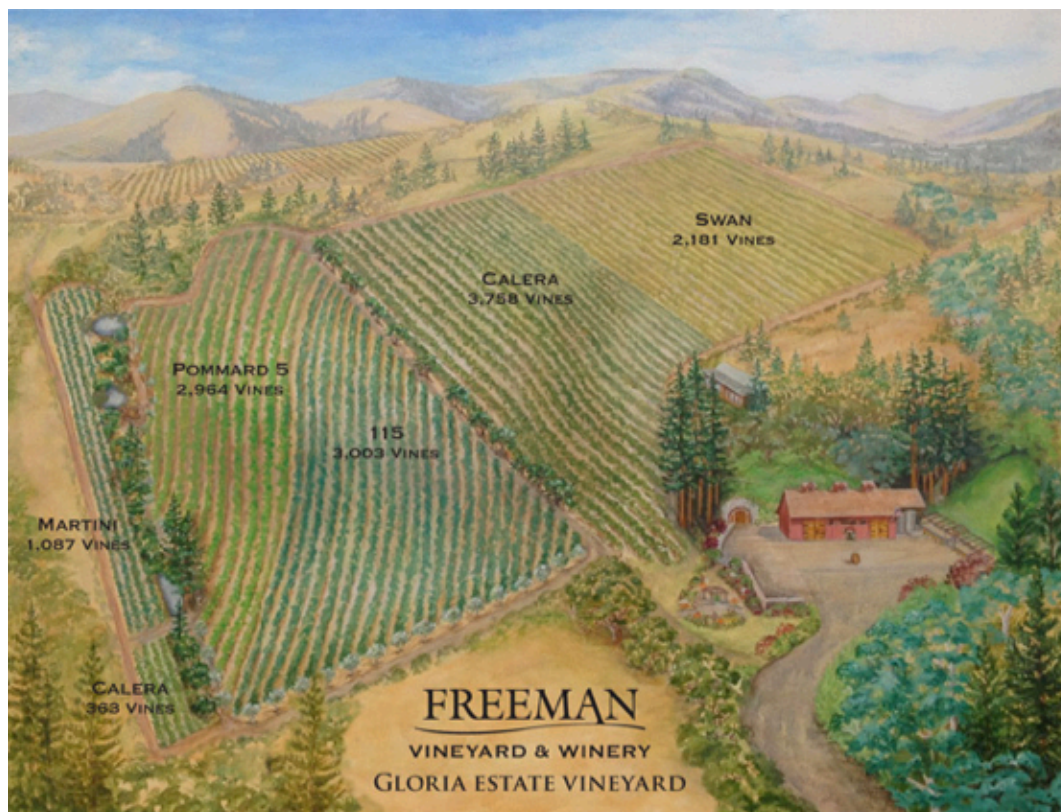
14.6% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.59, 634 cases, \$55. Release summer 2014. A vineyard perched above the fog and frost line at 1,500 feet elevation that receives early morning sun and cool afternoon breezes, never allowing the temperature to rise as high as the in the Anderson Valley below. 100% de-stemmed, 2-3 day cold soak, aged 10 months in new

and neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Fresh and lively aromas of cherry tart, strawberry, and vanilla lead to remarkably delicious core of red cherry and red berry fruits that are vivid and well spiced. Elegant, with balanced tannins and a mighty finish of uncommon length. A well-crafted, provocative wine that you can enjoy now or with age. 94.*



**2012 Lazy Creek Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.56, 257 cases, \$55. Release summer 2014. Named for the meandering creek that runs through the 95-acre property, Lazy Creek is located a few miles west of Philo off Highway 128. The ranch is planted to 36+ acres of grapes include an 8-acre block with a miniscule average yield that is said to be among the oldest Pinot Noir plantings in California. The entire ranch has been sustainably farmed since its early beginnings 40 years ago. Heritage and Dijon clones. 2-day cold soak, various yeast strains inoculated. Aged in 33% new and 67% older French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely aroma mix of cherry, boysenberry, rose petal, white pepper, underbrush and oak. Full-bodied flavors of earthy black cherry, black raspberry and plum. Serious extract that commands your attention but not jammy. Balanced tannins and complimentary integration of oak. The finish is long and intense, leaving behind a fruit wonderland. 92.*

**Freeman Vineyard & Winery** The 2012 vintage marks the release of the first vintage from the Gloria Estate Vineyard, situated on a hillside adjacent the winery. Five clones and/or selections were chose by winemaker Akiko Freeman including Swan, Calera, Martini, Pommard 5 and 115 to be planted at this cool corner of the Russian River Valley AVA. A sister vineyard, Yu-ki, located in the Sonoma Coast, is now in full production and along with Gloria will be the focal point of Freeman's estate wine program. The first Yu-ki Vineyard Pinot Noir will be released in 2015. Visit the newly expanded website at [www.freemanwinery.com](http://www.freemanwinery.com) to learn more about these two properties.





Freeman Vineyard & Winery was one of six founding members of the West Sonoma Coast Vintners (WSCV), an association of wineries and growers who farm wine grapes along the high-elevation coastline of Sonoma County. Membership in WSCV has grown rapidly as interest in the region has exploded. The organization travels to a few cities each year for a wildly popular series of seminars, tastings and dinners. In 2014, WSCV hosted its West of West (WOW) wine festivals in Chicago (April 9), Sebastopol (August 1-3) and Orange County (November 8). Like Freeman, most WSCV members are small, artisanal producers. For information about the events, visit [www.westsonomacoast.com](http://www.westsonomacoast.com).

The 2012 vintage was the first vintage since 2006 to yield an above average crop after five very small harvests in a row. Bloom occurred under perfect conditions with a large set. Summer was ideal and a perfect fall season allowed grapes to hang until late September and early October. The resulting quality was excellent in 2012. Total production remains less than 4,500 cases by design. Magnums of all wines are available.

**2012 Freeman Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 1,345 cases, \$44. 43% Gloria Estate, 21% Thorn Ridge, 20% Keefer Ranch, 15% Gunsalus. 5-day cold soak, free run sent to barrel, press wine settled and barreled separately. Aged 11 months in 29% new and 71% 1-to-4-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherry, baking spice and vanilla becoming more effusive over time in the glass. Modest concentration of cherry fruit with an echo of oak. Very charming with suave tannins and appealing harmony. A more elegant presentation of Russian River Valley fruit. 89.*

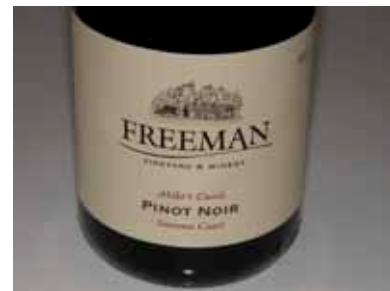
**2012 Freeman Keefer Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 420 cases, \$52. 44% 777, 38% 23, 16% 2A, 2% 115. Aged 11 months in 57% new and 43% 1-to-5-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas unravel slowly in the glass revealing spiced cherry, cranberry, forest floor and sweet oak. Admirable finesse and delicacy with lighter weight flavors of dark cherry and raspberry with a hint of spice and an echo of oak. A little more flavor and extract than the Russian River Valley bottling. 90.*

**2012 Freeman Gloria Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 188 cases, \$54. 47% Calera, 47% 115, 6% Swan. Aged 11 months in 36% new and 64% 1-to-3-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Uplifting aromas of black cherry glaze, black grapes, Chambord and seasoned oak. Mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, and a hint of cassis. The most concentrated of the 2012 Freeman Pinot Noirs, showing the exuberance of young vine fruit. The tannins are firm but suede in texture, there is bright underlying acidity and the finish is flush with fruit. Not showing a lot of nuance at this stage, but should improve over time in the bottle. 91-92.*

**2012 Freeman Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 1,221 cases, \$45. Sourced from 8 different vineyards with close to a third from Rayhill Vineyard on Falstaff Road in the Sebastopol Hills region of the Sonoma Coast. Aged 11 months in 36% new and 64% 1 to 4-year-old French oak barrels. *Shy, slowly evolving aromas of black cherry, cardamom spice and toasty oak. Respectable fullness on the palate with flavors of black raspberry, black cherry and spice. The wine has a spark of vibrancy, admirable balance and a pleasingly plush texture. 90.*



**2012 Freeman Akiko's Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 405 cases, \$62. A barrel selection chosen by Akiko Freeman, Ed Kurtzman and assistant winemaker Mitchell Masotti. A blend of 6 vineyards with the most contributed by Campbell Ranch near Annapolis (clone 777) and the El Coro Vineyard at Keller Estate (Swan and La Tache selection). Aged 11 months in 33% new and 67% 1 to 4-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose was initially closed for business, opening slowly in the glass with swirling over time to reveal wonderful aromas of blackberry jam, black raspberry coulis, rose petal and spice. Delicious essence of fresh dark berries with hints of cola and Hoison sauce. Modest in weight, but highly flavorful, with suave tannins, a satiny smooth texture and an expansive finish. The balance is spot on and the overall impression is magical. You can drink it now for its elegance, but it will be even better after a few years in the cellar. Best Akiko's Cuvée ever. 95.*



**Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery** Winemaker Theresa Heredia has now been at Gary Farrell long enough to put her stamp on the wines while maintaining the traditional Gary Farrell style. She joined Gary Farrell in early 2012. She trained with renowned winemaker Craig Williams at Joseph Phelps Vineyards and brought considerable critical acclaim to the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays of Phelps' Freestone Vineyards. The wines have bright acidity with good structure and aromatic charm. Visit [www.garyfarrellwinery.com](http://www.garyfarrellwinery.com).

**2012 Gary Farrell Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir**

14.5% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.72, 340 cases, \$60. Released May 2014. 100% de-stemmed, fermented in small open tanks after a 5 day cold soak. 10 days of extended maceration after fermentation. Aged 14 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Racked once off the primary lees just before bottling. *Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. Spirited and slightly exotic nose with aromas of fresh cherry, raspberry, dark red rose petal, clove cookies and a hint of sweet oak. An interesting and unique wine with delicious flavors of black raspberry, black cherry and black currant fruits embellished with toasty oak. Beautifully crafted with balanced tannins and a bright cut of acidity with a four-star, sweet black cherry finish. The flavors tiptoe to the edge of ripeness. 92.*



**2012 Gary Farrell Hallberg Vineyard Dijon Clones Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.70, 484 cases, \$60. Released May 2014. Partially de-stemmed (a small percentage of whole cluster was used), 5 to 7 day cold soak, 10 to 15 day extended maceration after fermentation. Aged 9 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Racked off the primary lees once just before bottling. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of very ripe dark berries, red and black licorice and spice. Mid weight flavors of very ripe blueberries and raspberries, with a hint of anise-laced oak. Juicy and bright with modest tannins and a soprano finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the fruit approached over ripeness in flavor. 89.*

**2012 Gary Farrell Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.68, 408 cases, \$55. Released May 2014. Partially de-stemmed, 5 to 7 day cold soak, 10 days of extended maceration post fermentation. Aged 9 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Racked off the primary lees once just before bottling. *Moderately dark reddish purple hue in the glass. Deep aromas of cherry, damp forest floor, marzipan and oak spice. Mid to full-bodied flavors of black cherry, plum and savory herbs. Very intense and fruity, with a numbing concentration of fruit on the finish which has a welcoming cut of acidity. 90.*

**Gloria Ferrer** When the Gloria Ferrer estate was purchased in 1982, José Ferrer's intent was to make world class sparkling wine following the méthode champenoise and the winery has succeeded in that goal. The initial viticulture team imported 12 clones of Chardonnay and 6 clones of Pinot Noir from Champagne, France. These clones had never been planted in the United States. Once it was decided which cuttings worked best for the Gloria Ferrer sparkling grapes and which for estate still varietals, the winery planted new land more suited for growing the estate varietals and named it Circle Bar Ranch. Over more than 25 years the commitment to creating estate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir runs deep. The 2011 Carneros Pinot Noir marks the 20th vintage of still wines at Gloria Ferrer. The winemaker is Steven Urberg who works with 335 acres of estate vines in Carneros. Visit [www.gloriaferrer.com](http://www.gloriaferrer.com).



**2011 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.55, \$27. Estate grown and bottled. A blend of about 7 clones, planted on both hillsides and flats in 11 soil types. Smallest yields in the history of the winery's vineyards. Harvest was delayed by as much as two weeks. Aged 9 months in 96% French oak, 4% Hungarian oak, with 27% new oak. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Initially, the nose is quite fruity with aromas of dark cherry, blueberry and pomegranate. Over time oak takes over. Mid weight, satisfying flavors of black cherry and dark red berry with oak driven notes of tobacco and toast in the background. Polished, juicy and well structured, with a generous charge of darker fruits on the pleasing finish. 89.*

**Hartford Family Winery** A family owned artisan winery founded by Don and Jenny Hartford. The first vintage was 1994. The winery is located in Forestville in Sonoma County. Winemaker produces top notch Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Zinfandel from cold climate regions of Green Valley, Russian River Valley, Los Carneros, Anderson Valley and the West Sonoma Coast. Jeff has been crafting Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Old Vine Zinfandel in Sonoma County for over 25 years and has held winemaking positions at Laurier, De Loach, Mark West, Kunde, La Crema and most recently Buena Vista Carneros. Visit [www.hartfordwines.com](http://www.hartfordwines.com).

**2011 Hartford Court Velvet Sisters Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., 385 cases, \$65. Estate vineyard. Name comes from a Boontling story about two sisters who were known for dressing in velvet.

*Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. Unfiltered and unfiltered. Intoxicating aromas of black cherry, dark raspberry coulis and vanilla oak. Very tasty black cherry core complimented by notes of baking spice and vanilla. Soft on the mid palate and easy to like, with admirable balance and a bright finish. 91.*

**2011 Hartford Court Arrendell Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 235 cases, \$90. This iconic vineyard located in a very cool part of the Russian River Valley was planted in 1975. Unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark violet color in the glass. Complex aromas and flavors featuring plum, boysenberry, black raspberry, black cherry, tea leaves, tobacco and herbs. Striking fruit intensity and a long, chewy finish with a substantial tannic backbone for aging. This wine has a certain "glow." 92.*

**Charles Heintz Vineyards** The Heintz family has farmed this coastal ridgeline site in western Sonoma County for 100 years and Charles in the third generation farmer of Heintz Ranch. Charles credits Ted Lemon with teaching him how to grow quality fruit and the two have been working together for nearly twenty years. Heintz produces 100% estate Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah wines, each of them usually less than 200 cases. The wines have recently made a leap forward in quality with the hiring of veteran winemaker Hugh Chapelle who directed the production of the 2012 vintage wines. Visit [www.heintzvineyards.com](http://www.heintzvineyards.com).



**2012 Heintz Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.56, 200 cases, \$48. 100% Swan selection. Aged 11 months on lees in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple hue in the glass. Highly aromatic, with bright scents of perfectly ripened cherry, cranberry and spice. A cherry bomb in the mouth that finds every nook and cranny, saturating the palate and holding tight through a long and mighty finish. Power without weight. Accents of spice, cola and oak add interest. The whole harmonious package. 94.*



**Jeff Cohn Cellars** Owner and winemaker Jeff Cohn, the "JC" of JC Cellars, got his start in the wine industry almost twenty years ago as an intern at Boordy Vineyards in Maryland. Jeff moved to California in 1993 to follow his dream of becoming a winemaker. He earned a master's degree in agriculture chemistry with an emphasis on enology at California State University, Fresno, in 1996. Upon graduation, he joined Rosenblum Cellars as an enologist and quickly became in charge of the entire white wine program. In 2000, he was promoted to winemaker and in 2004 became vice president of winemaking and production at Rosenblum. He was instrumental in creating cutting-edge barrel and yeast programs at the winery. He started his own label, JC Cellars, in 1996, and left Rosenblum in 2006 to focus exclusively on his own winery. His Zinfandels have garnered many awards. Located in downtown Oakland in a 15,000 square foot warehouse, production is over 5,000 cases annually. Visit [www.jccellars.com](http://www.jccellars.com).

**2012 JC Cellars Lancel Creek Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 100 cases, \$38. This vineyard was developed by Ulises Valdez in 2002. It occupies a rolling hillside near the town of Occidental. Pommard and 777 clones. Aged 9 months in 50% new French oak. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose grows on you over time, opening up to reveal aromas of Bing cherries, dark red berries, spice, and timber. Middleweight flavors of dark red cherries and berries with a hint of cherry cola and pomegranate. Soft and silky on the palate with a good cut of underlying acidity. Impeccably balanced and particularly refreshing due to the bright acidity on the intensely fruity finish. 91.*



**Joseph Jewell** This winery was born in 2006 when two good friends created their first two barrels of Pinot Noir in a Windsor garage. Micah Joseph Wirth and Adrian Jewell Manspeaker had no chateau or wealthy relatives to name their wine after, so they combined their middle names for the new venture, respecting both their collaboration and individual contributions to the project. The partners source fruit from vineyards in Sonoma and Humboldt counties. Visit [www.josephjewell.com](http://www.josephjewell.com).

**2012 Joseph Jewell Sonoma County Pinot Noir** 13.95% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.60, 658 cases, \$29. 22% Hallberg Vineyard, 31% Floodgate Vineyard, 45% Appian Way Vineyards. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 7% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very aromatic, reminding of Pinot Noir must and scents of cherry, raspberry, chocolate and herbs. Juicy and fresh, with lighter weight flavors of cherries, cranberries, spice and dried herbs. A pleasant wine that has thirst-quenching acidity on the cherry-driven finish. Tends to lose appeal over time in the glass. 87.*

**2012 Joseph Jewell Appian Way Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.44% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.61, 125 cases, \$39. Clones 777, 667 and 115. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 20% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is vibrant with aromas of mixed berry jam, raspberry cobbler, purple grape and warm brioche. Juicy and silky on the mid palate with likable flavors of plum, blueberry and blackberry, finishing with good length and mouthwatering fruit richness. There is a deft touch of oak and supple tannins making for easy drinking. What's not to like? 91.*

**2012 Joseph Jewell Floodgate Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.54% alc., pH 4.56, TA 0.61, 195 cases, \$42. Clones 777 and 667. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 33% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Shy fruit aromas with plenty of toasty oak to the front. Discreetly concentrated flavors of black cherry, blackberry and cola with noticeable freshness and intensity. The fruit core is mildly weighed down by oak, although the oak sheen tends to subside over time in the glass. I would give this wine another year in bottle for the oak to integrate. 89-90.*



**2011 Joseph Jewell Hallberg Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.95% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.62, 145 cases, \$44. Clones 777 and Pommard 5. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 33% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of cherry, raspberry and Middle Eastern spices. This is a nose you want to nibble. The flavors echo the nose with mid weight intensity and impressive polish. Baking spice and a good herbal note add interest. The tannins and acidity are nicely balanced and the finish is refined and flavorful. This is a beautiful wine that you want to keep coming back to. 94.*



**Joseph Phelps Vineyards** Justin Ennis was promoted to Winemaker at the company's Freestone estate on the western Sonoma Coast in February 2014. He will work closely with Vice President and Director of Winemaking Damian Parker. Ennis joined Joseph Phelps in 2007 as Cellarmaster at Freestone, after a nine year stint as Cellarmaster at Williams Selyem Winery, as well as Harvest Supervisor and Cellarmaster for wineries in New Zealand and Argentina, respectively. Visit [www.josephphelps.com](http://www.josephphelps.com).



**2012 Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyards Estate Grown Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 9,375 cases, \$55. 100% estate grown, 40% Pastorale Vineyard and 60% Quarter Moon Vineyard. Aged 13 months in 35% new and 65% 2 to 3 year old French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is complex and persistent with hi-tone aromas of dark cherry, blackberry, forest floor, spice and red licorice. A seamless wine with serious extract of black raspberry and blackberry fruits nicely accented with spice and oak. The finish is remarkably intense, leaving quite an impression. Probably the most concentrated Pinot Noir ever from this very cool locale, yet displays the cool-climate vibrancy to support the fruit load. A beauty that will attract many fans. 94.*

**Kendall-Jackson** The Jackson Estate collection is a new offering from Kendall-Jackson that includes wines made from favorite blocks of prized estate vineyards. The inaugural 2012 Outland Ridge Pinot Noir is from a site located at 1,500 to 1,800 feet elevation with chunky, broken rocks in thin soils on a high eastern ridge. The Winemaker is Randy Ullom.

**2012 Kendall-Jackson Jackson Estate Outland Ridge Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.67, TA 0.55, 2,794 cases, \$35. Clones "828" (36%), 667 (28%), Pommard 5 (18%), 777 (12%) and 117 (6%). Aged 10 months in 59% French oak, 30% new. *Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. Shy, almost nondescript aromas of smoky red berries. Much more expressive on the palate with intense middleweight flavors of black cherry, blackberry jam and smoky oak. Firm tannins lurk underneath. Lacks a bit of grip, but*

finishes with good aromatic persistence. The nose was much more giving the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **89.**

**LaRue Wines** Owner and winemaker Katy Wilson is really blossomed into a top flight Pinot Noir producer of West Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir. A graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a degree in Wine & Viticulture and Agricultural Business, she developed her winemaking skills at Testarossa, Torbreck Vintners in Australia, Joseph Phelps, Craggy Range in New Zealand and Flowers Winery where she was the assistant winemaker. Ross Cobb of Cobb Wines has also been a mentor, and Katy sources grapes from the same vineyards that Ross incorporates into his Cobb Pinot Noirs. Katy is a member of West Sonoma County Vintners and In Pursuit of Balance. The superb wines are sold through a mailing list and the winery's website store. Her first release was 2009. Visit [www.laruewines.com](http://www.laruewines.com).

**2010 LaRue Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., 310 cases, \$68. Aged 16 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Heavenly aromas of Bing cherry, mushroom, rose petal, underbrush, spice and everything nice. Delicious essence of black cherries complimented by a hint of spice and herbs. Impeccably balanced with luxurious texture and a big, deeply flavored, cherry finish.* **93.**



**2011 LaRue Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., 139 cases, \$60. Aged 17 months in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. An "Oh Man" nose with vibrant aromas of black cherry pie glaze, cranberry relish, spice cabinet and the slightest oak, picking up interest and intensity over time in the glass. Juicy and refined on the palate with a perfectly ripened, dark red cherry core and what seems like whole cluster spice. Slightly earthy with supple tannins, floating over the palate in an ephemeral jaunt, picking up power as it goes until the finish explodes in delightful exuberance. When tasting this one, I had to swallow.* **95.**



**2011 La Rue Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 12.8% alc., 47 cases, \$N/A (allocation only). Katy's first vineyard-designated wine. This vineyard is 6-acres located south of the town of Sebastopol. Soils are Goldridge sandy loam and volcanic ash (the ash is unusual for this area). Dijon clones. Aged 17 months in 50% new French oak barrels, then aged another year in bottle before release.

*Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. A high brow nose featuring scents of cherries jubilee, baking spice and dried rose petals. Charming in every way, with fresh, bright cherry and raspberry flavors accented with spice. Noticeably seamless and elegant with an endlessly long peacock finish that lasts over a minute. Totally amazing and impossible to score.* **97.**



**Longboard Vineyards** This producer in Healdsburg has taken on a new image with modernized, sophisticated labels, heavy bottles and wax closures. The wines have also taken a step forward in quality in the 2012 vintage. Visit [www.longboardvineyards.com](http://www.longboardvineyards.com).

**2012 Longboard Mysto's Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.58, 112 cases, \$56. From a vineyard near Westside Road, the exact location and owners remains a secret. Mystos is also the name of a surf spot known only to the locals who surf the Sonoma Coast and the winery principals won't tell you where that is either. Indigenous yeast fermentation, aged 16 months in French oak. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry cobbler, Asian spice, anise and vanilla lead to a delicious core of Bing cherry fruit accented with notes of strawberry, exotic spice and vanilla pastry cream. The fruit is strikingly fresh and juicy, bringing the drinker to attention, and is back by zippy acidity that is unusual for the Russian River Valley, showing up as a refreshing cut on the bright and intense cherry-themed finish.* **92.**



**2012 Longboard Flying Rooster Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.65, 116 cases, \$48. This vineyard is located in the Petaluma Gap. Grapes are 100% de-stemmed but not crushed and allowed to cold soak for 3 days. Indigenous fermentation. Aged 15 months in French oak and bottled unfined. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Subdued nose initially, opening slowly in the glass to offer scents of ripe*

dark berries and oak cask. Layers of interesting flavor including black cherry, pomegranate, dark raspberry and tobacco. Admirable harmony with balanced tannins and a lip-smacking finish with good intensity and length. **90.**

**MacPhail Family Wines** This winery was founded in 1998 by winemaker James MacPhail and the inaugural Pinot Noirs were released in 2002. James learned winemaking at Quivera, Pellegrini and Merry Edwards. The wines are handcrafted in small lots at a 5,000 case winery in Healdsburg opened in 2008. Grapes are sourced from well-regarded vineyards in various California appellations. An Oregon Pinot Noir and Chardonnay was introduced in 2011. MacPhail Family Wines and Sequana Vineyards (which MacPhail founded in 2007) are part of The Hess Collection. The wines are allocated through a mailing list with some national distribution. Visit [www.macphailwines.com](http://www.macphailwines.com).

I have tasted many MacPhail Pinot Noirs over the years and have a love-hate relationship with them. James likes to lean on new oak in his wines and some wines display too much oak sheen (and therefore wine unbalance) for my personal taste. When the oak is well-integrated, the wines can be magnificent in a rich, ripe California style.

All wines are 100% de-stemmed, receive about a 5-day pre-fermentation cold soak and are fermented in small open bin fermenters using native yeasts and or inoculated yeasts. Native malolactic fermentation in barrel, and stirring of the lees in barrel once every week for 3 months. The wines are aged 11 months sur lie in 33.3%-50% new and 1 and 2-year-old French oak barrels from several coopers. The wines are bottled unfined and unfiltered.

**2011 MacPhail Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.31, TA 0.53, 616 cases, \$40. Released fall 2013. Harvest Brix 23.5°-25.0°. Sourced from Anderson Creek (667, Pommard) and Annahala (777) vineyards. Aged 11 months sur lie in 50% new, 15% 1-year-old, and 25% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromatically alive with scents of black cherry, black raspberry and sweet, toasty oak. Well-sustained mid palate core of black cherry fruit with a robust, intense, sweet (fruit) and sour (acid) toned finish. The tannins are well balanced and the bright acidity adds verve. There is too much tarry, charred oak overlay for my taste.* **87.**

**2012 MacPhail Toulouse Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.90, TA 0.57, 308 cases, \$49. Released spring 2014. Harvest Brix 24.5°. Wädenswil 2A, 667, 115, 777 clones. Aged 11 months in 41% new, 25% 1-year-old and 34% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of oak-infused black cherries lead to a mid to full-bodied, fruit-driven wine with plenty of black cherry and blackberry lushness. The tannins are nicely integrated and the finish has reasonable length and drive. The barrel work is a bit overbearing.* **88.**

**2012 MacPhail Wightman House Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.80, TA 0.53, 193 cases, \$55. Released spring 2014. 100% Martini clone. Harvest Brix 27.0°. Aged 11 months in 38% new, 25% 1-year-old, and 37% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Dense and very ripe, showing typical Martini clone character. Aromas of cassis, blackberry, dark chocolate and a subtle floral note. A voluptuous array of black fruits are complimented with an underpinning of dark chocolate and well integrated oak. The tannins are grainy and robust, but well tucked in, and the finish displays serious extract. An ideal wine for steak or short ribs.* **91.**



**2012 MacPhail Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.57, 2,479 cases, \$40. Released fall 2013. Sourced from 8 vineyards. Multiple clones. Aged 11 months sur lie in 40% new, 30% 1-year-old, and 30% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. The nose features darker fruits and spice with a generous imprint of cigar and toast. An interesting wine with generous flavors of cherry, raspberry, clove and nutmeg, with a noticeable, but complimentary tug of oak. This wine should find wide appeal.* **89.**

**2012 MacPhail Wildcat Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.57, 246 cases, \$49. Released spring 2014. Harvest Brix 24.4°. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Pommard. Aged 11 months in 40% new, 30% 1-year-old, and 30% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Demure aromas of cherry pie and sandalwood. The aromas have not arrived yet in this wine but do get better over time*

*in the glass. Delicious essence of fresh cherries with a hint of graham in the background. Juicy, with modest tannins and a generous red-fruited finish. There is a sense of heat on the finish but otherwise this is a very appealing wine. 91.*

**2011 MacPhail Sundawg Ridge Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.57, 394 cases, \$49. Released fall 2013. Harvest Brix 24.3°-24.7°. Pommard, 115 and Calera clones. Aged 11 months sur lie in 50% new, 25% 1-year-old, and 25% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of redwood forest, briar, and red cherries and berries. Mid weight flavors of black cherry and black raspberry with an oak-driven cigar, herb and toast overcoat. Dense and sappy with managed tannins and a silky, somewhat lengthy finish. Tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine still showed overbearing herbal oak. 86.*

**2011 MacPhail Rita's Crown Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.54, 253 cases, \$49. Released fall 2013. Harvest Brix 24.0°. Clones 115, 777 and "828." 25% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 11 months in 50% new, 25% 1-year-old, and 25% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Prominent aromas of oak-driven vanilla and toast with a hint of black cherry in the background. Full-bodied array of dark cherry and berry flavors with a tug of dry oak and oak tannin and a vanilla sheen on the finish. The oak plays too big a role for me to enjoy this wine. 86.*

**2011 MacPhail Vagon Rouge Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.56, 135 cases, \$65. Released spring 2014. Sourced from Mardikian Estate Vineyard (Sonoma Coast), Susanna's vineyard (Green Valley) and Lakeview Vineyard (Green Valley). Harvest Brix 25.5°-27.0°. Pommard, Wädenswil 2A, Calera, Dehlinger Swan and a suitcase clone from Gopher Hill. Aged 11 months sur lie in 33.3% new, 33.3% 1-year-old, and 33.3% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Dark reddish purple hue in the glass. Oak dominates the prodigious fruit in this wine which features a lush core of Bing cherry fruit laced with cola and anise flavors. Bombastic, yet velvety smooth with integrated tannins and a touch of heat on the sweet and almost numbingly concentrated finish. 88.*

**2011 MacPhail Roserock Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 12.8% alc., pH 3.28, TA 0.57, 260 cases, \$49. Clones 667, 777 and "828." Harvest Brix 21.0°. 10-25% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 11 months in 50% new, 25% 1-year-old, and 25% 2-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Plentiful aromatic expression with scents of red and black cherry, strawberry, spice, rose petal and oak. Mid weight flavors of red cherry, red raspberry and cranberry with a modest oak sheen. Silky on the mid palate with some finishing intensity and length. Bright acidity brings focus and vibrancy to the wine making it highly refreshing. The most elegant wine tasted among the 2011 lineup. 90.*

**Reuling Vineyard** Planted in 2000, Reuling Vineyard is composed of 12.2 acres of Pinot Noir (Calera and two Burgundian Vosne-Romanee clones) and 2.2 acres of Chardonnay (Montrachet selection). The vineyard is located in Forestville, Sonoma County. After selling fruit to Aubert and Peter Michael for ten years, Tim and Jackie Reuling began producing their own wines with winemaker Matt Taylor. Natural and organic farming techniques are practiced. Learn more at [www.reulingvineyard.com](http://www.reulingvineyard.com).

**2012 Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., H 3.79, TA 0.54, 1,000 cases, \$70. Reuling clone 'L' 50% whole cluster, Calera and Reuling Clone 'R' 100% de-stemmed. 3 clones fermented separately. Native yeasts, 5-day cold soak, 16 day fermentation. Aged in 45% new and 55% used French oak. *Moderately dark reddish purple hue in the glass. Aromas of oak-kissed black cherry, blackberry and Asian 5-spice. Mid to full-bodied flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, cassis and spice. A big wine with a generous backbone of tannin, yet still juicy and enticing with an intense fruit-driven finish. A serious wine with long term expectations. 92.*

**Sojourn Cellars** Craig Haserot and winemaker Erich Bradley started Sojourn Cellars in 2000 and released their first Pinot Noir in 2004. Their handcrafted wines have since won considerable praise from the wine press. Multiple vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs are offered from primarily the Sonoma Coast AVA. The wines are sold through an allocated mailing list with limited distribution. The Pinot Noirs are consistently among my favorites and they show remarkable consistency. The wines reviewed here have admirable balance and easy approachability. Sojourn has a barrel program in which consumers may own an individual barrel of luxury wine created by winemaker Erich Bradley. Once the barrel has finished aging, Sojourn will help create a private label for the bottles. Each barrel produces 288 bottles of wine. Visit [www.sojourncellars.com](http://www.sojourncellars.com).

**2012 Sojourn Cellars Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.58, 825 cases, \$54. Vineyard located in the northern end of the Petaluma Gap. Rocky soils that are de-vigorating. Clones 115, "828," and 667 fermented and aged separately and then blended. 10% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherry, baking spice and toast. Smooth and harmonious on the palate, with layers of flavor including black cherry, black raspberry, saffras, and spice. The toasty oak is nicely integrated, the tannins are supple and the wine finishes with respectable intensity. This is the most concentrated wine in the 2012 Sojourn lineup, but the wine handles its sappy fruit beautifully.* **92.**



**2012 Sojourn Cellars Campbell Ranch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., H 3.66, TA 0.57, 275 cases, \$59. This vineyard is located in the remote far west Sonoma Coast near Annapolis and is now managed by Ulises Valdez. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Clones 115 and 777. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose evolves beautifully over time in the glass, revealing an enticing array of aromas including cherry pie glaze, spiced raspberry, red plum and garden flora. Velvety on entry and exit with mid weight flavors of blueberry and cherry with the slightest riff of spice. This wine is more than fruit centric with an appealing earthy, forest undertone. Beautifully balanced with submerged tannins and welcoming finishing intensity.* **94.**

**2012 Sojourn Cellars Silver Eagle Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.57, 325 cases, \$59. This 30-acre vineyard is located in the hills north of Occidental in the Green Valley AVA at the western edge of the Sonoma Coast. The wine is a blend of multiple blocks including Pommard, Calera and Vosne-Romanee selections. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose unravels nicely over time in the glass, revealing upbeat aromas of dark cherry, grape, and dark raspberry. Juicy and vibrant, featuring dark red fruit flavors with a complimentary sheen of oak spice. The tannins are nicely balanced and the spicy finish is invigorating.* **92.**



**2012 Sojourn Cellars Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.55, 1,150 cases, \$54. This vineyard is located on Roberts Road at the western base of Sonoma Mountain in the Petaluma Gap. Clones 115 and 777 form the foundation of this wine with some Pommard clone and Swan selection blended in. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Deep aromas of dark red cherries, raspberries and rose petals bring the nose to attention. Delicious flavors of fresh cherries, baking spice and sandalwood on a seamless frame. Very satisfying, with an appealing modesty and elegance and a silky mouth feel. A cherry kiss on the generous finish encourages another sip.* **94.**



**2012 Sojourn Cellars Rodgers Creek Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.56, 725 cases, \$48. Released spring 2014. This vineyard is perched high on a ridge in the Petaluma Gap. The foundation of this wine is Pommard clone, a 15% portion of which is fermented whole cluster. Clone 777 is blended in. Aged in 50% new French oak. Unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. Whole cluster plays a role in this wine with noticeable floral and exotic spice aromas evident on the nose and a slight vegetative, mushroom note underlying the middleweight core of earth-kissed cherry fruit. Soft in the mouth with noticeable but not intrusive tannins, this wine will benefit from more time in bottle.* **90-92.**

**2012 Sojourn Cellars Wohler Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.57, 550 cases, \$48. Release fall 2014. Young vines (vineyard replanted in 2005-2006) planted to Wädenswil 2A, "828," 115 and 667. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Modest reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherry, cola, spice and sweet oak. The mid weight core of cherry fruit is blessed with hints of cola and spice, and the wine's velvety mouth feel is very comforting and seductive. Fine-grain tannins show up on the finish. This wine has plenty of youthful bright fruit that can't be ignored, but this is not a luscious Russian River Valley fruit bomb. Further time in the cellar will be rewarded.* **91.**



**Truchard Vineyards** A family owned and operated winery in Napa Valley consisting of a 400-acre estate located in the upper Carneros region. The site's unique topography allows optimal growing conditions for numerous wine grape varieties. The winery currently produces Chardonnay, Roussanne, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Merlot, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Tempranillo and Petit Verdot. The Truchards have been growing grapes in the Napa Valley since 1974 and have been making wines since 1989. The winery is housed in a one-hundred-year-old renovated barn. A small image of the barn appears on the front label of every bottle of Truchard wine. Truchard wines are all made with estate grown grapes from within a mile of the winery. Sal Delanni is the talented winemaker. Truchard Chardonnay and Pinot Noir have been named to Wine Spectator's Top 100 list a total of six times. Truchard Vineyards has been named Top Estate Winery of the Year by Wine & Spirits seven times. Visit [www.truchardvineyards.com](http://www.truchardvineyards.com).



**2012 Truchard Carneros Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.62, 4,088 cases, \$35. Seven clones (two Martini clones, Pommard, Swan, 115, 667 and 777) with vine age ranging from 16 to 38 years. 100% de-stemmed with about 20% whole berries in the open top fermenters. Cold soak 5 days and inoculated with Assmanhausen yeast. Aged 10 months in 35% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Highly aromatic nose with scents of black cherry, strawberry, baking spice, rose hips tea and oak vanillin. Middleweight ripe fruit flavors featuring black cherry, raspberry, cola and a hint of sassafras. There is a slight underlying earthiness and complimentary oak spice. The finish is particularly appealing with a juicy cherry theme and commendable length. Nothing out of place, and highly approachable now. 92.*



**Wait Cellars** This winery was founded by Bob Wait, a local to San Francisco's Lower Haight neighborhood and owner of The Page on Divisadero Street. Bob has taken wine and grape growing courses over the years at University of California at Berkeley and Davis and is in the winemakers program at Davis. Wait Cellars is a fully bonded winery leasing equipment and space at Bluxome Street Winery in San Francisco's SOMA district. Production is about 350 cases annually of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Winemaking is non interventionist with a portion of whole cluster as the vintage allows, native fermentations, elevage sur lie, a modest oak program, and no fining or filtration. The limited production is sold to wine club members and existing customers. Visit [www.waitcellars.com](http://www.waitcellars.com).



**2012 Wait Cellars Devoto Garden Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 315 cases, \$32. 100% clone "828." 20% whole cluster, 5-day cold soak, indigenous fermentations, aged 10 months sur lie in 15% new and 15% one-filled French oak. Lees stirring through the winter. *Moderate reddish purple color and slightly hazy in the glass. This wine definitely exhibits signs of whole cluster in a good way. Aromas of cherry and raspberry are complimented by notes of stem, herbs and graham. Discreetly concentrated flavors of fresh, juicy red cherry, red raspberry and baking spice supported by modest tannins and bright acidity. The finish is particularly appealing, with a vibrant charge of iced cherry fruit. Plenty of Pinot singing in this beautifully crafted wine. 92.*



# Spring is Time for Pinot Noir Rosé

Rosé is a bit of enigma for Pinot Noir producers. Consumers love it and usually eagerly snap up all of a winery's production shortly after release. The problem is that you can't charge much for Rosé, despite the expense of Pinot Noir grapes and Rosé production. Premium Rosés have an image problem because they are referred to as "blush" wines, and are often thought of as White Zinfandel equivalents. About \$18-\$22 seems to be the sweet spot to attract consumer interest, and at this price level, wineries receive little or no profit.

The popularity of Rosé wine is skyrocketing, but domestically and in countries like France. According to a January 2014 Nielsen report, retail sales of premium rosé wines (bottles priced at or above \$12) rose by 39 percent on volume and 48 percent on value last year.

The best Rosés come from producers who dedicate a special part of their vineyard to Rosé, groom the vines specifically for Rosé production, and give serious winemaking attention to the vinification of Rosé. When Rosé is well-made, the only thing better than a chilled glass of Rosé is another glass of Rosé. The 2013 Rosés are all of astonishingly high quality.

**2013 Bucher Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$18, screwcap. *Moderately deep pink orange color in the glass. Aromas of dried herbs, underbrush, and shellfish salinity. Moderately full on the palate with flavors of cherries, orange-infused cranberries, and savory dried herbs. The wine picks up interest and fruitiness over time in the glass and is still fine two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 89.*



**2013 Heintz Vineyards Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.64, 125 cases, \$19, screwcap. A blend of two clones field sorted and hand picked followed by de-stemming with a gentle "berry popping." Grapes are cold soaked for 3 to 4 hours and then gently pressed. Aged 4 months on lees without stirring in neutral French oak and 60 gallon stainless steel drums. Bottled January 2014. *Light pink orange color in the glass. Love the nose offering a perfume of fresh strawberry, blood orange and complimentary floral array. Interesting and complex, with flavors of red berries, melon, pear, and vanilla cream. Slightly creamy on the palate with a dry, refreshing finish. An exceptional Rosé. 92.*



**2013 MacPhail Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.55, 400 cases, \$22. Released spring 2014. Sourced from all the winery's Sonoma Coast vineyards. Multiple clones. Harvest Brix 23.7°-26.0°. 100% de-stemmed, juice saigné after 24 to 48 hour cold soak. *Moderate red orange color in the glass. Aromas of strawberry, yellow peach, dried rose petals and herbs lead to full-bodied flavors of cherry, strawberry, and orange water. What this wine lacks in vibrancy, it makes up with intensity of flavor and can stand up to substantial foods. 88.*

**Ousterhout Wine & Vineyard** A winery owned by plastic surgeon, Douglas Ousterhout, M.D., and his spouse Nancy, that specializes in Zinfandel from the Ousterhout Estate in Alexander Valley, Sauvignon Blanc from Dry Creek Valley, and uniquely, Rosés from the Russian River Valley. The winemaker is Micah Wirth who trained at Gary Farrell Winery for years, teaming up at the same time with a partner to create the Joseph Jewel brand. The Rosés are gently whole cluster pressed and free run juice is sent into tank. The wines were recently released at the winery's 1st Annual Spring Wine Tasting in San Francisco. Visit [www.ousterhoutwine.com](http://www.ousterhoutwine.com).



**2013 Ousterhout Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 360 cases, \$25. *Light pink orange color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of strawberry jam, orange marmalade and yellow peach. Endowed with luscious flavors of red berries and white stone fruits, this wine is light and pleasant on the palate with a slightly creamy mouth feel and a crisp, lengthy finish. 90.*



**2013 Ousterhout Woods Vineyard Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., 379 cases, \$25. *Light pink orange color in the glass. Enticing aromas of cranberries and strawberries with a hint of dried herbs and baking spices. Plenty of flavor punch featured strawberry, yellow peach and blood orange. Polished with a dry, pleasing finish. This Rosé really comes at you. 91.*



**2013 Ousterhout 800 Vines Vineyard Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., 124 cases, \$25. *Moderate pink orange color in the glass. Lovely scent of strawberry, rhubarb, cranberry, rose petal and petrichor. Nicely flavored and smooth on the palate with notes of red berries and pear. Crisp and refreshing, with a little less concentration than the Woods Vineyard bottling, but more welcome minerality. 91.*



**2012 Soliste Soleil Rouge Sonoma Coast Rosé de Pinot Noir** 13.1% alc., 327 cases, \$22. *Moderate pinkish-orange color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of raspberry, strawberry, herbs and macaroon. Light and lively on the palate with red berry and blood orange flavors, finishing with high-wire, orange-infused acidity. 89.* The 2012 vintage of Soleil Rouge Rosé has just been released.



**2013 Stoller Family Estate Dundee Hills Pinot Noir Rosé** 13.8% alc., pH 3.24, TA 0.69, 1,515 cases, \$20. *Moderate pink color. Grandiose aromas of raspberry, strawberry, guava and orange peel. Crisp, lively and refreshing, with flavors of Texas red grapefruit, red berries, white peaches and a hint of watermelon. Thoroughly enjoyable with a finishing burst of fresh peach flavor and a zest that urges another sip. 92.*



**2013 Van Duzer Willamette Valley Pinot Noir Rosé** 13.1% alc., 1,800 cases, \$18, screwcap. Release June 2014. 100% estate grown. A rigorous block selection was used to create this wine. Selected vines were encouraged to produce a higher yield to retain acidity. An early pick of clone 115 and a later pick of Wädenswil clone were blended. This Rosé, like few others, is intentionally created through directives in the vineyard and winery to produce a distinctive wine. After gentle pressing, the juice was inoculated with four yeasts to highlight the aromas and mouthfeel. After a slow and cold fermentation in stainless steel tanks, the wine was aged on lees. *The color is a very pretty and modest orange coral. Love the aromas of strawberry, blood orange and cut flower bouquet. This wine offers everything you could want in a Rosé with fresh flavors of strawberries, raspberries, orange zest, a hint of herbs in the background, a creamy mouthfeel and bright citrus-infused acidity. This dry wine is extremely agreeable to drink and unusually provocative for a Rosé. 93.*



# Sips of Recently Tasted California Chardonnay

**2011 El Molino Rutherford Napa Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., 856 cases, \$60. Grapes are from the estate Star Vineyard. Chardonnay vines planted in 1978. Clones are Wente 4, Stony Hill and Atlas Peak. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Bold aromas of lemon rind, pineapple and toasty oak. Incredible depth of flavor including lemon pudding, yellow peach and burnt caramel. A voluptuous offering with a good tug of oak but a bright vein of acidity keeping the wine in focus.* **91.**



**2012 Ernest Vineyards Rued Vineyard Dutton Ranch Green Valley of Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.4% alc., 180 cases, \$42. Rued-Z clone. Aged in 27% new French oak and 49% stainless steel. 33% malolactic fermentation. *Moderate light golden yellow color in the glass. A uniquely aromatic wine with scents of pineapple, lemongrass and floral perfume. Bright and crisp on the palate, with flavors of yellow stone fruits, lemon, tangerine and vanilla, and a vein of stony minerality in the background.* **87.**

**2012 Gary Farrell Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.6% alc., pH 3.26, TA 0.69, 400 cases, \$50. Release May 2014. The majority of this blend comes from the River Block clone 5 planted in 1989. Harvest Brix 22.5°. Whole cluster pressed, inoculated with Montrachet yeast, transferred to 40% new French oak barrels and 500-L puncheons for fermentation and 8 months of barrel aging. Racked off the lees once just before bottling. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of petrichor, lemon, nut oils and eau de vie de poire. Somewhat lush on the palate, with appealing flavors of lemon curd, green apple, white peach, finishing with a grip of juicy minerality.* **90.**



**2012 Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyards Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.8% alc., pH 3.32, TA 0.65, 317 cases, \$50. Sourced from two adjacent vineyards, Rochioli and Allen. Mainly clones 76 and 15 from three blocks of the Allen Vineyard and the balance is clone 5 from the Rochioli River Block. Harvest Brix 22.5°-23.0°. Whole cluster pressed using two regimens. River Block grapes pressed using a slightly more extractive program, while a gentle, modified Champagne program was used for the smaller clusters of the Allen Vineyard. After pressing, the juice was transferred for native fermentation and 8 months of barrel aging in 40% new French oak barrels and 500-L puncheons. The wine was racked off the primary lees only once before bottling. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Clean and bright on the nose with aromas of lemon, citrus blossom, golden apple, and passion fruit. Richly flavored with baked apple, yellow peach, apricot and caramel with a creamy mouth feel and a burst of electric, citrus-driven acidity on the finish.* **90.**

**2011 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.66, \$25. Numerous Chardonnay clones and selections grown in a variety of soil types. Whole cluster pressed, 100% barrel fermented, lees stirring in barrel every 4 weeks for 6 months, aged in 100% French oak barrels for 9 months. 50% malolactic fermentation. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The nose offers primarily oak-driven aromas with notes of baked pear and peach in the background. Slightly creamy on the palate, with flavors of pear, peach, nut oils, citrus and spice with a good underbody of citrus-driven acidity. More appealing the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **88.**



**2012 Heintz Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.52, 200 cases, \$45. Clone 4 (Wente) on AXR1 planted in 1982. Barrel fermented, 11 months in barrel on lees with stirring 1 to 2 times per month only until malolactic fermentation complete. Aged in 35% new French oak barrels. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. A reference wine for California Chardonnay. High brow aromas of lemon, Granny Smith apple, marzipan and toast lead to flavors of lemon curd, honeyed nuts, toasty oak and a hint of tropical fruits. Polished and seductive with perfect harmony between California fruit hedonism and bright, mineral-driven acidity. Still invigorating the following day when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **95.**

**2012 Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyards Estate Grown Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.0% alc., 3,970 cases, \$55. 100% malolactic fermentation. Aged 14 months in 35% new and 65% 2 to 3-year-old French oak puncheons and barrels. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. A knockout nose features bright, fresh aromas of apple, yellow grapefruit, lemon zest and ocean air. Delicious and refreshing, with flavors of lemon curd, grapefruit, gooseberry and a hint of toasty oak. The finish is alive with lemon-driven, stony acidity and lasts and lasts. Bring on the oysters. 93.*



**2012 Kosta Browne One Sixteen Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.61, \$58. Grapes sourced from Boudreaux, Charles Ranch, El Diablo, Heintz, Searby, Ulises Valdez and Zio Tony vineyards. Multiple clones. 93% barrel fermented and aged in 41% new French oak, 7% concrete fermented. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon, orange blossom, lychee and buttery brioche. Creamy and full on the palate, with layers of flavor including lemon cake, lime, nectarine, caramel, and honey, finishing with some length and uplifting acidity. A decadent, succulent style that will find appeal. 90.*

**2012 MacPhail Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.55, 234 cases, \$40. Released spring 2014. Sourced from Gap's Crown Vineyard. Harvest Brix 25.4°. Dijon 96. 100% whole cluster pressed. 91% stainless steel tank fermented and 9% neutral barrel fermented. 60% malolactic fermentation. Unfined and unfiltered. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Enjoyable aromas of lemon, banana, almond butter and sea spray. The flavors of lemon, green apple, pear and herbs are backed by well integrated acidity. A solid, unwooded, fruit-driven style for those who like their Chardonnay unplugged. 87.*

**2012 MacPhail Gap's Crown Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.56, 450 cases, \$45. Released spring 2014. Harvest Brix 25.4°. Dijon 76 and 96. 100% whole cluster pressed. Indigenous yeast fermentation. Aged 11 months sur lie with weekly lees stirring in 27% new, 23% 1-year-old, 23% 2-year-old, and 27% 3-year-old French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Fresh aromas of lemon zest, apple pan dowdy, nut oils and brown butter. Flavorful, moderately rich, and creamy on the palate with tastes of baked apple, lemon curd, buttery pear, and toasty oak, finishing with some warmth. 88.*

**2012 Phelps Creek Vineyards Columbia Gorge "Lynette" Chardonnay** 13.7% alc., 178 cases, \$N/A. 100% French oak barrel fermented using grapes from estate vineyards. Named in honor of owner, Bob Morus' fiancée, Lynette. Dijon clone. *Mild golden yellow color in the glass. Interesting aromas of butter cream, nuts, briny minerality and cherry blossom. Quite flavorful and discreetly rich, with notes of lemon curd, pineapple, honey, and blond caramel. Slightly creamy on the palate with a lemon-driven finish. Still enjoyable two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating age ability. The flavors are the clincher. 92.*

**2010 Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., \$65. Barrel fermented, 100% malolactic fermentation. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Intriguing, many-faceted nose offering aromas of golden apple, creme brulee, green leaf and briny minerality. Full-flavored, even striking, with an array of lemon, golden apple, baked pear, golden toast and oak vanillin flavors. The plush mouth feel is very flattering and the lemon-infused, oak blessed finish has uncommon persistence for a Chardonnay. You will need your big boy pants on to handle this one. 92.*

**2012 Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.0% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.56, 350 cases, \$70. From 2.2 acres of Chardonnay planted to a clone from the Montrachet vineyard in Burgundy that has been dubbed "The Reuling Clone." Whole cluster pressed to barrel, native yeast fermentation, and aging 10 months in 50% new and 50% used French oak barrels. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. A classical, French white Burgundy styled wine with aromas of lemon, lime, green apple, petrichor and toast. Discreet fruit flavors of lemon curd and white-fleshed fruits with complimentary smoky oak in the background. The wine has sound mineral-inflected acidity and proper balance to age. 92.*



**2011 Soliste Les Cailles Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.6% alc., 69 cases, \$50. Fermented in concrete eggs from Burgundy for 11 months, then transferred to 100% neutral oak and aged an additional 11 months. *Light straw yellow color in the glass. Lovely aromas of lemon, fresh pineapple, yellow peach and honeysuckle. Very bright in the mouth, with polished flavors of lemon curd, pear, and grapefruit. Crisp, with well integrated oak and a mouth watering finish. 91.*



# Pinot Briefs

**Prince Featured on KX 93.5 FM Laguna Beach** Jim Kennedy, The Wine Guy @ The Wine Hour hosted me for a 60 minute conversation about all things Pinot as part of Firebrand media. Listen to the podcast at [www.kx.onelaguna.com/show/thewinehour](http://www.kx.onelaguna.com/show/thewinehour).

**SLO Wine Country's "Roll Out the Barrels"** San Luis Obispo County launches its 24th Annual Roll Out the Barrels celebration with new events on June 19-22. The celebration is best known for its "Barrels in the Plaza" food and wine event on Thursday, June 19, at Mission San Luis Obispo. Friday night are winemaker dinners, and Saturday and Sunday is "Passport to SLO Wine Country Weekend where event ticket holders visit area wineries all day and enjoy complimentary tastings, music, light bites and discounts on wine. New this year is "Barrel Sample Sunday," where attendees can taste upcoming releases from barrels at member wineries. Throughout the weekend, each winery will also be selling a new "6-Pack Sampler," that includes six wines that best represent each winery's offerings and style at a special price. Roll Out the Barrels ticket holders will enjoy a 10 percent discount to the "Summer Krush" concert presented by The Krush 92.5 FM and Otter Productions at the Avila Beach Resort. A SLO Wine Country Summer Krush Wine Tasting Lounge will precede the concert from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. For information and tickets, visit [www.slowine.com](http://www.slowine.com).

**Russian River Valley Pinot Classic** Presented by the Russian River Valley Winegrowers over Memorial Day weekend, May 24-26, this event offers a "Neighborhoods of Russian River Valley Seminar," a Passport to Pinot Barrel Tasting from more than 30 Russian River Valley wineries, a Paulée dinner hosted by Jean Charles Boisset at DeLoach Vineyards with participating wineries including Arista, Benovia, DeLoach, Joseph Swan, Hartford Family, Kosta Browne, Merry Edwards, Thomas George, and Williams Selyem. A VIP option is also available that includes a VIP reception at Kosta Browne winery on May 23. \*\*\*\*\***SPECIAL OFFER for PinotFile readers: 4 free tickets to the Passport to Pinot Barrel Tasting on May 24 and 25 (tickets are normally \$65 per person). Use this code at [www.pinotclassic.com](http://www.pinotclassic.com) to redeem up to 4 tickets: PRINCEPP14.** Participating wineries for Pinot Barrel Tasting: Ancient Oak Cellars, Bacigalupi Vineyards, Balletto Vineyards & Winery, Bucher Vineyard, C. Donatiello Winery, Carrozzi Vineyard, Cartograph Wines, Christopher Creek Winery, DRNK Wines, Dutton Estate Winery, Dutton-Goldfield Winery, Emeritus Vineyards, Forchini Winery & Vineyards, Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Gordian Knot Winery, HANNA Winery & Vineyards, Hartford Family Winery, Harvest Moon Estate & Winery, HKG Estate Wines, Hop Kiln Vineyards, Joseph Swan Vineyards, JW Vineyards, La Crema, La Follette, Lauterbach Cellars, Lost Canyon Winery, Matrix Winery, Merriam Vineyards, Moshin Vineyards, Mueller Winery, Russian Hill Estate Winery, Russian River Vineyards, Siduri Wines, Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards, Thomas George Estates, Valdez Family Winery, Vizslay Vineyards & Family Winery, and VML Winery.



**Key To Wine Country Weekend** A new experience weekend in Santa Barbara Wine County June 20-22. Attend a blending session, sample soon-to-be-released wines from barrel, enjoy a lakeside picnic, taste library wine verticals, meet winemakers in their cellars, and walk the vineyards. Keys to the event are \$100 per person and are limited to 500 keys sold. Many events are included with a key purchase. Participating wineries include Ampelos Cellars, Andrew Murray, Buttonwood Farm Winery & Vineyards, Cold Heaven, Dierberg & Star Lane, Imagine Wine, Larner Vineyard, Melville, Presqu'île, Samsara, Riverbench, Solomon Hills, Summerland Winery, Zaca Mesa and Zotovich Cellars. Visit [www.sbcountywines.com](http://www.sbcountywines.com). Request a free touring guide also at this link.

**Santa Barbara County Celebration of Harvest** Reserve October 10-13 for four days of winemaker dinners, special tastings and offerings, tasting room open houses and the Celebration of Harvest Festival featuring more than 100 winery members of the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association pouring alongside regional food purveyors. The Festival is being held this year at the historic Old Mission Santa Ines in downtown Solvang. Tickets are now on sale with early bird pricing at [www.sbcountywines.com](http://www.sbcountywines.com).



**Ponzi Unveils Sparkling Grape Juice** Ponzi Vineyards has debuted a small production sparkling grape juice Mother's Day weekend made from 100% Gewürztraminer. Cugini ("cousins" in Italian), is the brainchild of second generation winery owners, sisters Luisa and Maria Ponzi. The inspiration for the bottling came from their children. At family events, they thought everyone should have a special beverage in hand to toast with. Only 100 cases will be sold at the three Ponzi Vineyards tasting rooms in Sherwood, Dundee and Beaverton. For more information visit [www.ponziwines.com](http://www.ponziwines.com).

**Domaine Drouhin Oregon Debuts Edition Limitée** On May 17, DDO will hold the first Edition Limitée celebration as the first opportunity to taste the 2012 Edition Limitée (EL) Chardonnay and the 2011 EL Pinot Noir. The EL Chardonnay is produced from 100% Dijon clones grown on the Drouhin Family Estate in the Dundee Hills. These vines are some of the oldest Dijon clones on the Estate. The wine is whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented, and after 11 months in barrel, Véronique selects her favorite four barrels. Visit [www.domainedrouhinoregon.com](http://www.domainedrouhinoregon.com).

**Sonoma County Committed to be First 100% Sustainable Wine Region** The Sonoma County Winegrowers (SCW) recently announced that Sonoma County is committed to becoming the nation's first 100% sustainable wine region through a three-phased program to be completed within the next five years. The SCW represents 1,800 wine growers throughout Sonoma County. There are currently 59,218 acres in Sonoma County planted to vineyards, which accounts for 6% of Sonoma County's total acreage. More than 40% of Sonoma County's vineyards are less than 20 acres and 80% are less than 100 acres. The Sonoma County wine industry had a \$13.4 billion impact in 2012, providing 54,297 full-time equivalent jobs.

**Oregon Wines Fly Free on Alaska Airlines in 2014** In honor of Oregon Wine Month (May), the Oregon Wine Board, Travel Oregon and Alaska Airlines have partnered to bring back the Oregon Wines Fly Free Program for one year. Visitors traveling from Oregon beginning May on Alaska Airlines, can check a case of Oregon wine for free. More than 250 wineries joined the program in 2013. Oregon is the first state to partner with an airline on a statewide wines fly free program. In addition, passengers showing their Alaska boarding passes within a week of their arrival to Oregon will receive complimentary tastings at any of more than 300 participating Oregon wineries.

**Wine Museum Planned** A planned 15,000-square-foot wine museum will be located in downtown Santa Rosa in the former AT&T telephone switching building fronting on Third Street across from Courthouse Square. The venue will have 5,000 square feet of exhibits, and a 2,000-square-foot tasting room for sampling from a rotating list of 40 to 60 wines on tap and 10 to 20 by the bottle. There will be interactive sensory experiences, and demonstrations of how different types of oak and levels of toasting affect the flavor of wines. The plans also call for a 6-seat theater, meeting rooms, a wine library and bookstore, and a commercial kitchen for preparing food for food and wine pairings. 50,000 visitors are projected to visit each year. Visit [www.californiawinemuseum.org](http://www.californiawinemuseum.org).