



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

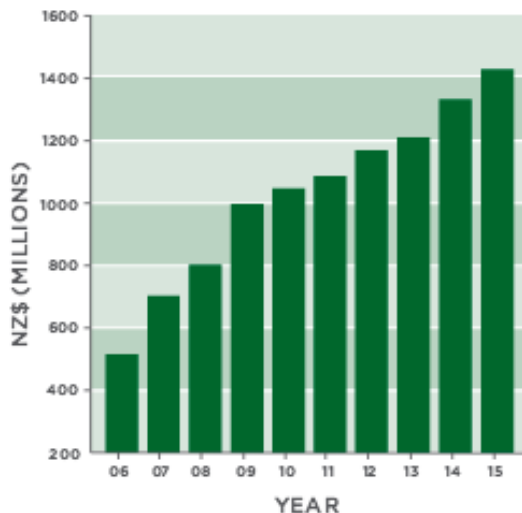
Volume 10, Issue 25 February 8, 2016

*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

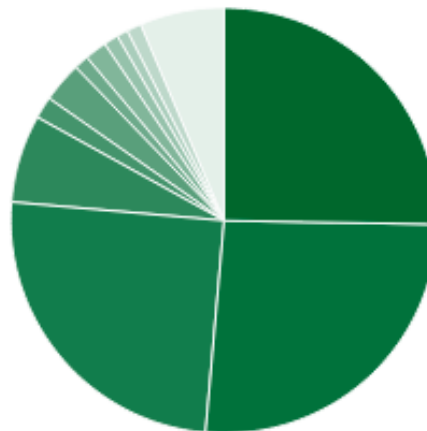
Revisiting New Zealand Pinot Noir on the Occasion of Spectacular 2013 Vintage

The New Zealand wine industry is thriving in a relatively small country that depends on exports for its survival. According to the 2015 New Zealand Winegrowers Annual Report, the value of New Zealand wine exports grew 7% in 2015 to reach a new record of \$1.42 billion. Three markets, Australia, UK and USA each account for around one quarter of exports (the USA is the largest export market by value) with significant future growth potential evident in North American and China. New Zealand wine is exported to more than 90 countries. Exports of Pinot Noir nearly doubled from 2008 to 2015.

2015 WINES BY EXPORT VALUE



2015 MAJOR MARKETS BY VALUE
NZ\$ (MILLIONS)

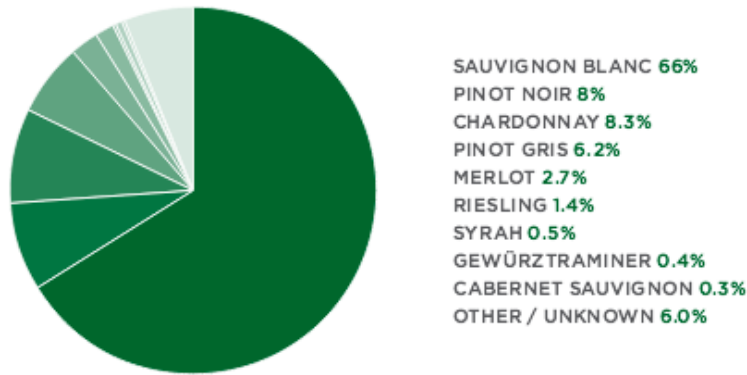


USA	372
AUSTRALIA	362.1
UK	354
CANADA	95
CHINA	27
NETHERLANDS	41.4
HONG KONG	17.7
SINGAPORE	20.7
IRELAND	17.4
JAPAN	13.7
SWEDEN	13.2
OTHER	90.2

New Zealand is still renowned for Sauvignon Blanc which accounts for the vast majority of the country's wine production, but Pinot Noir, and even Chardonnay, is attracting the most attention from wine connoisseurs. As Nick Stock, Australia Gourmet Traveller Wine, pointed out in April 2015, "The attention given to New Zealand Pinot Noir is well above what's deserved in terms of the amount made, but factor in their quality across a range of styles and it's easy to justify the hype." Refer to chart below for percentage of production by varietal.

From 2006 to 2015, the number of New Zealand wineries has increased from 530 to 673 and the number of growers from 87 to 762. Total producing vineyard area in 2015 was 88,609 acres. Pinot Noir acreage has increased from 10,039 acres in 2006 to 13,748 acres in 2015 (nearly equal to the 14,027 acres of Pinot Noir in the Willamette Valley).

VINTAGE 2015 (BY VARIETY)



Although New Zealand Pinot Noir exports are increasing, only a small amount of the top end wines reach fine wine retail stores in the U.S.. Periodically, I like to assemble a representative sample of wines available here to see the quality and styles of New Zealand Pinot Noir. I have found that a range of wines are produced much like the variety of Pinot Noir evident stateside, ranging from elegant, classic Pinot Noirs, to more earthy, mineral-driven styles, to sappy, highly extracted examples. It is impossible to talk about a specific New Zealand style, especially since the Pinot Noirs from the three largest Pinot Noir growing regions, Martinborough in the North Island, and Marlborough and Central Otago in the South Island, produce wines that are quite different in character.



Prices for many of the better bottlings of New Zealand Pinot Noir are modest compared to similar stateside wines. There is also a vast quantity of value-priced labels that are fine, but no better than the value-priced labels from California and Oregon.

The commonly planted New Zealand Pinot Noir clones are similar to those in wide use stateside (Pommard-UCD 5, Martini - UCD 13, and Dijon 113, 114, 115, 375, 667 and 777) except for the Abel clone (also known as the Ati Rangi clone) that is allegedly a suitcase selection from Domaine de la Conti smuggled into New Zealand in the 1970s and unique to New Zealand. AM 10/5 (also known as Anton Meyer and origin is Wädenswil, Switzerland) and AM 2/10 (also a Wädenswil clone), were the first premium Pinot Noir clones imported into New Zealand in the 1980s.

Winemaking, at least for most of the wines reviewed here, is very similar to that employed in California and Oregon. The grapes are mostly de-stemmed, with variable but usually low amounts of whole cluster. There is a cold soak, followed by indigenous yeast fermentation in small vats, and a post fermentation extended maceration. Aging can vary from 10 to 18 months, usually in 30% or less new French oak barrels. The wines are usually unfiltered. The Kiwis are leaders in screwcaps, and the majority of wines are closed with a screwcap.

Early 2016 is a suitable time to look at examples of New Zealand Pinot Noir because the 2013 vintage wines are in our retail marketplace now. 2013 was an exceptional vintage in New Zealand and has been hailed as “vintage of a lifetime,” vintage to remember,” and “one of the best vintages in recent memory.” 2013 was a near perfect growing season in New Zealand leading to a record crop that exceeded the 2012 vintage by 28%, with the 2013 Pinot Noir crop 36% larger. 2014 turned out to be an even bigger crop for New Zealand (30% higher).

Wine Spectator and *Wine Enthusiast* review and score some New Zealand Pinot Noir, as do James Suckling and Jancis Robinson, but the most comprehensive coverage is by wine critics specializing in New Zealand such as Bob Campbell, MW - www.bobcampbell.nz, Raymond Chan - www.raymondchanwinereviews.co.nz, Geoff Kelly - www.geoffkellywinereviews.co.nz, and Sam Kim - www.wineorbit.co.nz. It is interesting that an article just appeared on January 20, 2016, at www.nzherald.co.nz, “Paid-for wine reviews draw flak.” The latest code of ethics of the Wine Writers of New Zealand strongly discouraged the practice of paid-for wine reviews, emphasizing that any minor conflicts “had to be fully disclosed to all interested parties.” University of Otago associate professor in marketing Lisa McNeill said, “It is naive for people to think the practice of paid reviews wasn’t common across all industries.” She encouraged wine writers to avoid engaging in accepting payment from a wine company to review its product. None of the wine writers mentioned here were implicated.

I picked out wines to review that were well regarded by New Zealand wine critics and available for sale in the USA. There are many stunning wines here and some that combine excellence with value. I believe you will find these Pinot Noirs are more akin to California brethren in style than Old World, offering plenty of extraction and ripe phenolics, yet ABV levels that are generally lower than California Pinot Noirs. I found that a number of wines when tasted two to three days after opening, had lost vibrancy and charm, seemingly bogged down by the fruit load. The tannins had melded, but the wines lacked acidity. If you look at the acidity levels of the wines reviewed (where available), they are not particularly high. With a few exceptions, I think these are showy wines for early drinking, but not long term cellar candidates. They are like noted female actors at the Oscars: primed and primed for television, but when seen two days later at Starbucks, seem rather ordinary.

Look for these wines at retailers such as K&L Wine Merchants in California, Saratoga Wine Exchange in New York and other sources listed on www.wine-searcher.com.

2014 Cognizant Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 112 cases, \$16.99 (sold out), screwcap. Imported by DJK Imports, South San Francisco, CA. Cognizant is a new collaborative project between K&L and some of New Zealand’s best winemakers. This wine was made from the same grapes as TWR (Te Whare Ra) 2014 Pinot Noir that was Decanter magazine’s Top New Zealand Pinot Noir for 2014. Winemakers are Jaseon and Anna Flowerday of TWR. Fruit is from home block in Renwick and a neighboring block in Raiwiri. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Challenging to pull any fruit out of the nose which features aromas of woodland and roasted almond. Light to mid weight sandalwood-infused flavors of cherry, red and purple berries, and spice. Easy to drink, with modest tannins, and a cherry-fueled finish. 88.*



2014 Rod Easthope Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc, \$11.99 (NakedWines.com Angel Price), screwcap. Imported by nakedwines.com, Napa, CA. Includes a measured amount of whole cluster. *Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of cherry, elderberry and woodfern. The mid weight core of dark red cherry and berry fruits framed by silky tannins is easy to like. The intense mid palate fruit attack continues with through the finish. I like this wine for its open, gregarious personality. A terrific value. 91.*



2014 Akitu "A1" Black Label Central Otago Pinot Noir \$29.99, screwcap. Imported by DJK Imports, South San Francisco, CA. This is the premier wine of the estate. Vineyard is near the town of Wanaka in one of the highest and coldest spots in the region with dense schist soils. 71% Abel, 17% Pommard 5, and 11% 115. 28% whole cluster. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 24% new. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very complex nose displaying hi-tone aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, peppered beef, beef bouillon, cake spice and a hint of oak. The flavors echo the aromas in a middleweight format. A very lovely wine with admirable balance and a finishing burst of fruit that really hangs on. 92.*



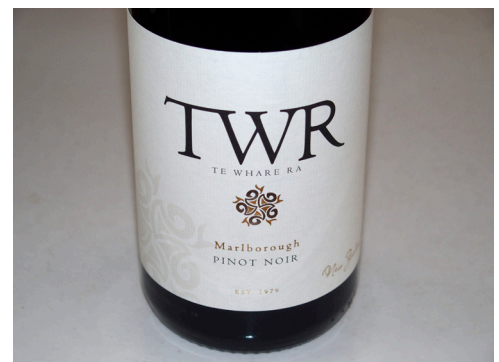
2014 Felton Road Block 3 Bannockburn Central Otago Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$69.99. Imported by Young's Market Co., Tustin, CA. 100% organic and biodynamic viticulture since vineyards first designed beginning in 1991. This wine is taken from older vines in Block 3 of The Elms Vineyard, one of four properties farmed by Felton Road in the Bannockburn sub-region of Central Otago. 25% whole clusters, fermented with indigenous yeast, moderately long maceration on skins, aged 13 months in French oak barrels. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Engaging aromas of black cherry, sous-bois and tobacco. Beautifully composed, with a delicious attack of black cherry fruit accented with sweet oak and well-proportioned tannins. The finish has remarkable staying power. The oak overlay is not imposing and should further integrate over time. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine was even more appealing. Easy to find superlatives for this gorgeous Pinot. 94.*



2013 Felton Road Bannockburn Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$55, screwcap. Imported by The Country Vintner, Inc., Ashland, VA. A blend of three vineyards: Cornish Point, Calvert and The Elms. 25% whole clusters, indigenous yeast fermentation, moderately long maceration on skins, aged 11 months in French oak barrels. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black cherry, rose petal and Asian 5-spice reflecting some whole cluster inclusion. Luscious, yet lively, mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, blueberry and pomegranate, framed by firm, but balanced tannins. Beautifully composed with the right touch of oak, and a pleasing finish. 92.*



2013 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 800 cases, \$26.99, screwcap. Imported by DJK Imports, South San Francisco, CA. Hand selected from two single blocks, one in deep alluvial gravel soils and one from heavier clay soils. Clones 113, 114, 115, 667, 777, 10/5, Abel and Pommard 5 from TWR Vineyard in the Omaka Valley. 100% de-stemmed, cold soak, fermented whole berry, small portion by indigenous yeasts. 17-days on skins, aged 12 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Engaging aromas of black cherry, Asian 5-spice, sandalwood and fir tree. Delicious core of dark red cherry and raspberry with a silky entry and exit. Forward and embracing, with*



impeccable balance, and an intense cherry-driven finish. A very stylish Pinot Noir that is light on its feet. This wine really captured my attention, especially at this modest price. 94.

Escarpment

As legend would have it, Maori navigator Kupe abandoned three canoes at the site of Escarpment Winery after discovering the land now known as New Zealand. Escarpment rests on 60 acres of alluvial gravel in the Te Muna Valley near Martinborough. The soils are over 75,000 years old and are a nurturing matrix for grapevine roots. The estate's four vineyards provide 70 percent of Escarpment's grape supply.

Kupe Estate Vineyard is a high density planting of Abel clone with deep alluvial gravels and own rooted vines. Pahi comes from McCreanor Vineyard that was first planted by Jack McCreanor in 1986 and is among the oldest Pinot Noir vineyards in New Zealand. Both grafted and own rooted clone 10/5 vines. (This vineyard was sold after Jack McCreanor's passing so the source of this bottling will change) Te Rehua contains multiple clones of Pinot Noir planted in 1990 by Geoff Bunny and now owned by Tim and Ruth Bartin (Barton Vineyard). Kiwa comes from Cleland Vineyard that was planted on the Martinborough Terrace alluvial gravels in 1989 by Graham and Gill Cleland and contains a blend of UCD Davis clones 5, 6 and 13.

The winery buildings are inauspicious, standing watch on the renowned Martinborough River Terraces and overlooking the river itself. The barrel room is tucked underground and enjoys ideal cellar temperatures below its grassy roof.

Escarpment was established in 1998 as a joint business venture between Robert & Mem Kirby (of Australia's Village Roadshow and owners of Yabby Lake Winery in the Mornington Peninsula of Australia) and Larry and Sue McKenna.

Larry McKenna is an iconic New Zealand winemaker who was anointed "The Prince of Martinborough Pinot" by James Halliday, but his self-anointed title is "Larry McPinot." Larry was born and raised in Adelaide, South Australia. He graduated from Roseworthy Agricultural College in 1976, and has nearly three decades of winemaking experience. In 1986 he became CEO and winemaker at Martinborough Vineyard and put the winery on the world map as one of the preeminent New World Pinot Noir producers. Since 1999, Larry has been director and winemaker for Escarpment. Escarpment was a featured winery at the 2015 International Pinot Noir Festival (see photo below)

Besides the Escarpment bottling, the four wines in the Martinborough Insight Series (Kupe, Kiwa, Pahi and Te Rehaua), offer an insight into the terroir of Martinborough. They are particularly inspiring wines, in 2013, and will certainly age for 10 to 15 years with aplomb. A mid price point series of wines is offered under The Edge brand. The winery also offers a Rose, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Riesling from Escarpment Vineyard.

2013 Escarpment Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.49, \$56, screwcap. Imported by Meadowbank Estates (a division of Empson USA Inc), Alexandria, VA. Ideal crop that did not require thinning. Fermented with indigenous yeasts, on skins for 18 days, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting earth-kissed aromas of black grape, blackberry jam. Impressive fruit expression, with an exhilarating array of juicy purple and black fruits backed by modestly muscular tannins. The finish embraces with a cornucopia of ripe fruit. 92.*

2013 Escarpment Single Vineyard Kiwa Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.48, \$56. Grapes come from Cleland Vineyard. 24-year-old vines, deep alluvial gravels, clones UCD 5, 6 and 13. Fermented in wooden vats, on the skins 16 days, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The least expressive wine of the three single vineyards reviewed here, but still offering a peak at impressive potential. Aromas of mixed berries and loamy soil lead to a gorgeous core of blackberry and black raspberry fruits beautifully accented with spice and oak. This well-structured, mid weight plus wine has nicely balanced acidity and a finish replete with dark fruited goodness. A brooding wine that only hints at the 10 to 15 year future. 93.*



2013 Escarpment Pahi Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.50, \$56. Sourced from McCreanor Vineyard that has vines that are 26-years-old. Clone 10/5. On the skins 19 days, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Engaging aromas of cherry, strawberry and wilted rose. Impeccable marriage of black cherry fruit and oak in a mid weight style with suave supporting tannins. Admirable harmony, with an array of perfectly ripened dark red fruits, finishing with a peacock tail of aromatic good will. The most "feminine" of three Single Vineyard wines tasted together. 94.*



2013 Escarpment Te Rehua Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.51, \$56. Grapes grown on Barton Vineyard that has vines over 22 years old and many clones. Soils are deep alluvial gravels. Fermented in wooden vats, total vat time 18 days, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The seductive nose is incredibly exotic and intoxicating, with highly expressive aromas of blackberry, black plum, spice and tobacco humidor. The heavenly fruit core is both savory and succulent, offering an array of purple and black fruits. A subtle spice and floral note adds intrigue. The wine exudes mouth watering vigor and fruit expression with well-defined, bold tannins adding substance. More expressive on the nose than palate now but the divine flavors will catch up over time in the cellar. 95.*



2013 Tongue In Groove Clayvin Vineyard Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$29.99, screwcap. Imported by DJK Imports, South San Francisco, CA. An iconic site in all of New Zealand sitting at the top of Brancott Valley, one of the first areas in Marlborough recognized for winegrowing potential. Deep clay soils, high-density planted, organically farmed. Cold soak, indigenous yeast fermented with 25% whole clusters, high portion of whole berries, 21 to 25-days on skins, aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, natural malolactic fermentation. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Little fruit on the nose which features aromas of underbrush and oak. Mid weight plus flavors of dark red and black fruits with generous power on the mid palate and finish. Well-matched, muscular tannins. A solid fruit-driven expression of Pinot Noir. 89.*

2013 Grey's Peak (Greystone Wines) Waipara Valley New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$24.99, screwcap. Imported by DJK Imports, South San Francisco, CA. Hand selected by K&L Wines. Vineyard is in South Island, one hour north of Christchurch, and sits in the rain shadow of the Southern Alps of Lord of Rings trilogy fame. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermented, post-fermentation extended maceration up to 3 weeks, aged 12 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose leads with aromas of toasty oak and pipe smoke. On the palate, the juicy black cherry core has plenty of oak overlay. Modest tannins and easy drinkability, with a sweet and sour cherry-driven finish. 88.*



2013 Valli “Bendigo” Gibbston Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.79, 440 cases, \$44.99, screwcap. Grant Taylor has been making wines in the region since 1993 and has crafted wines for many iconic Central Otago wineries as well as his own label. Valli was established in 1998 and named after his great-great grandfather, Giuseppe Valli, who

immigrated to New Zealand. This wine is a single vineyard bottling from Bendigo. Harvest Brix 25.3°. Clone 777 planted in 2000. 33% whole cluster, 22 days on skins, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 34% new. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. The perfume of blackberry, cassis and spice draws you into the glass. On the palate, the fruit intensity is remarkable, featuring a sensory onslaught of violet and black fruit and peppery spice flavors. The bodacious fruit sap is matched to daunting tannins which surface with an astringent charge on the finish. This wine will benefit from several years in the cellar to ameliorate the tannins, and can certainly last well into a second decade. 94.*



2013 Quartz Reef Bendigo Single Vineyard Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.50, \$31.99, screwcap. Imported by Station Imports, San Jose, CA. This winery is named after New Zealand’s largest quartz rock deposit that underlies the estate’s vineyards at Bendigo, Central Otago. Winemaker Rudy Bauer is a pioneer in Central Otago. The biodynamic Demeter® Certified Bendigo Estate Vineyard was planted in 1998 to clones 115, 10/5, 667, 777, and Abel on various rootstocks. 5 to 7-day cold soak, indigenous yeast fermented, post-fermentation maceration of up to 12 days, aged in 24% new, 33% 1-year and 43% older French oak barrels. Gently egg fined. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The scent of wild berries, rose bush and oak lead to a mid weight core of blackberry and boysenberry fruit flavors embellished with hearty tannins, finishing with a lip-smacking charge of well-ripened and aromatic fruit. 91.*

2013 Two Paddocks “The First Paddock” Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$69.99. Imported by Negotiants USA Inc., Napa, CA. A small family winery started by noted actor Sam Neill in 1993 with modest ambitions and 5 acres of Pinot Noir in Gibbston, Central Otago. At the same time, a friend, Roger Donaldson, planted the land next door (his brand is Sleeping Dogs), hence the name Two Paddocks. The first vintage from this vineyard (the bottling is named “The First Paddock”) was 1997 and by 2009 was producing world-class Pinot Noir. The original vineyard has now been augmented by Alex Paddocks, a 7-acre vineyard planted in 1998, Two Paddocks “The Last Chance” Pinot Noir has been produced from this vineyard since 2002. In 2000, Redbank, a 130-acre farm planted to Dijon clones of Pinot Noir was acquired and forms the backbone of the Two Paddocks Pinot Noir. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and toasted oak lead to a mid weight plus styled wine featuring juicy black cherry and blackberry fruits with an earthy undertone and a rather marked oak overlay (toast, espresso). The wine is particularly notable for the intensity of the lingering finish that speaks of liquor-soaked Maraschino cherries. This wine will appeal to those who prefer their Pinot Noir well-oaked. When tasted two days after opening, the wine still had noticeable oak influence. 91.*

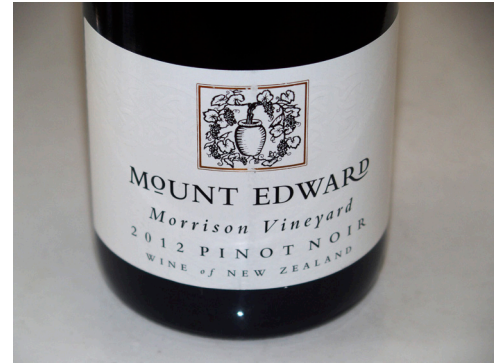
2012 Clos Henri Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.49, \$29.99. Imported by Chambers & Chambers, San Francisco, CA. This winery was established and originally run by the famous Sancerre winegrowing family of Henri Bourgeois. Arnaud Bourgeois is the current GM of Clos Henri. Close-planted vines (twice that of most Marlborough Vineyard) in heavier clay soils of estate vineyard. Clones Pommard 5, 10/5, 667, 777, 114, 115, and Abel. 8 to 13-year-old vines grown in the Wairau Valley of Marlborough. 100% de-stemmed, whole berry fermentation, 1-week cold soak, 3-week cuvaion, aged 12 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The oak-themed nose offers aromas of tobacco, espresso, toast and spice. The lovely core of fresh dark red and black fruits wears a significant oak imprint. The silky tannins well integrated, and the wine finishes with good length. 88.*



2012 Pegasus Bay Waipara Valley New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$34.99, screwcap. Imported by Empson USA Inc., Alexandria, VA. The Donaldson family, who own and operate this winery, are pioneers of local winegrowing and winemaking. Ivan Donaldson is a wine writer, wine judge and viticulturist. His eldest son, Matthew, is a winemaker and 2012 marked his 20th vintage at Pegasus Bay. A multi-clone blend from vines up to nearly 30-years-old and on their own roots. Mostly de-stemmed, whole berry fermentation, 10% whole clusters added to vats. Cold soak, post-fermentation cold maceration of 1-2 weeks, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, spice, underbrush and*

barnyard lead to a middleweight styled wine with earthy dark red and black stone and berry fruits underpinned with a light touch of toasty oak. Inviting elegance, modest tannins, and a very enjoyable finish. 92.

2012 Mount Edward Estate Morrison Vineyard Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 371 cases, \$39.99, screwcap. Imported by DJK Imports, South San Francisco, CA. A small winery in Gibbston founded in 1997 by one of the pioneers of Central Otago wine, Alan Brady. The owner has been John Buchanan and winemaker Duncan Forsyth since 2004. Grapes are sourced from several organically certified vineyards in the sub regions of Central Otago. The Morrison Vineyard was planted in 1997 on Wanaka Road. Indigenous yeast fermented, aged 15 months in French oak barrels and bottled unfined and unfiltered. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is flush with earthy black cherry and black berry fruits complimented by notes of spice and clay pot. The mid weight black cherry, boysenberry and blackberry fruit is well-ripened and juicy, framed by well-matched ruddy tannins. Gorgeous harmony, finishing with a burst of lip-smacking dark fruit aromatic goodness. This beauty definitely has an earthy tone. 93.*



2011 Craggy Range Te Muna Road Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.53, \$34.99, screwcap. Imported by Kobrand Corp., New York, NY. Business man Terry Peabody established this winery and engaged Kiwi viticulturist and Master of Wine, Steve Smith, to become his partner. This winery planted most of its vineyards in the late 1990s and early 2000s. From the beginning in 1998, they pursued single vineyard wines and

Craggy Range was the first in the Southern hemisphere to adopt making single vineyard wines from multiple regions of the country. The 230-acre Te Muna Road Vineyard was planted largely to Pinot Noir in 1999 in the Martinborough Terraces subregion of Martinborough. There are eight clones in more than 40 different parcels. The current winemakers work under the direction of Steve Smith. 10% whole cluster, inoculated yeast fermentation, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 27% new. Filtered.

Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of Bing cherry, rose petal, sandalwood and toasty oak. An intense charge of cherry fruit greets the palate, carrying its goodness through a pleasurable finish. A very sleep wine with a silky texture, a deft touch of oak, and a delightful kiss of cherry on the finish. 93.



2010 Dry River Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.58, RS <2.0g/l, \$69.99. Neil and Dawn McCallum planted a vineyard in one of the oldest Martinborough sheep stations in 1979. The area has become known as the Martinborough Terrace (and Martinborough Terrace Appellation), a gravelly, free-draining area within the lowest rainfall zone in the North Island. In 2002, the winery and 30 acres of vineyards were sold to New York businessperson Julian Robertson and California winegrower Reg Oliver who owns El Molino Winery in St. Helena, CA. Neil McCallum remained the winemaker until his retirement in 2011 and was replaced by Wilco Lam. Currently, the estate vineyards include Dry River Estate (first plantings 1979), Craighall Vineyard (first plantings 1983), and Lovat Vineyard (first plantings 1992). Dry River wines are highly valued, sold primarily by mail order, and only tiny quantities reach the USA retail market. Harvest Brix 23.0°. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Intriguing aromas of dark fruits, Mexican-spiced dark chocolate, clay and damp earth. Mid weight plus core of purple and black fruits accented by notes of spice, espresso and bittersweet chocolate. Luscious and sappy, but suave and sleek, with mildly firm tannins and vital acidity, finishing with a charge of sweet blackberry fruit. Trends toward very ripe, even slightly roasted fruit flavors. A unique and individualistic wine quite distinct from other New Zealand Pinot Noirs tasted for this review. 91.*



2010 Terra Sancta “Jackson Block” Bannockburn Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.58, 350 cases, \$29.99, screwcap. Imported by Terrell Wines, San Francisco, CA. The winery name means “sacred earth or special place.” Sourced from the 64-acre estate that contains four vineyards. This block runs along Felton Road

where the vines grow in schist gravels. This bottling is named after Jackson Barry, who ranged the area telling yarns and seeking fame and fortune. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Floral, earthy and fruity (black cherry) on the nose. A full-bodied and delicious attack of blackberry, Hoison sauce, black tea, dark chocolate and spice flavors saturate the palate. A good grip of dry tannins are in line with the fruit load in this very suave wine with a velvety mouthfeel that is particularly majestic. A compliment of oak and a generous, lengthy finish complete the picture.* **93.**



Cattleya: California Wines with a French and Colombian Accent

I first met Bibiana González Ravez several years ago at the World of Pinot Noir when we were interviewing young winemakers for a feature on Grape Radio: “A Day in the Sun at the 2011 World of Pinot Noir,” www.graperadio.com/archives/2012/02/09/a-day-in-the-sun-at-the-2011-world-of-pinot-noir/. Her interview was the only one of several that I still remember, since her story was unlikely and intriguing. She dreamed of making wine since the age of 14, growing up in Medellín, Colombia, yet that country had no wine culture at all. Bibiana would study chemical engineering in Colombia, but go on to work in the vineyards and cellars of Burgundy, the Rhone Valley, Bordeaux, Alsace and Cognac, and earned a Technician of Viticulture and Oenology diploma in Angoulême, followed by a Diploma of Oenology with honors from the University of Bordeaux.



After an extraordinary experience working at Château Haut-Brion, she moved to Sonoma County in 2004 and gained winemaking expertise working 14 harvests in California at wineries that included La Crema, Peay Vineyards, Au Bon Climat and Qupé, before becoming the director of winegrowing and winemaking at Lynmar Estate in 2009. Bibiana would leave Lynmar Estate in 2011 and become the winemaker for Pahlmeyer’s Sonoma Coast project, Wayfarer, in 2012. At Wayfarer she has crafted exceptional Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays that have made my annual All-Americans list. Bibiana was named “2015 Winemaker of the Year” by *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and her wines have received considerable praise from the wine press.

Most recently, she launched her own brand, Cattleya (“Cat-LAY-a”), the culmination of a dream that started more than 20 years ago, offering vineyard-designated Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah. Cattleya is an orchid, the national flower of Colombia, and is one of the most beautiful and delicate orchids in the world. The wines are sold through an allocated mailing list at www.cattleyawines.com. They are not inexpensive, but they reflect

passionate and experienced winemaking of the highest standards and are connoisseur's wines by a Colombian-born, French-trained, California-based winemaker.

Bibiana has partnered with her spouse, winemaker Jeff Pisoni, to make Shared Notes, a high-end Sauvignon Blanc producer. She also launched Alma de Cattleya, a value-priced brand of California wines to be distributed in Columbia.

If you have had the good fortune to sample Wayfarer wines, you know that they are rather bold expressions of Pinot Noir, almost an antithesis of the trend in Sonoma Coast to pick early and offer more delicate wines with lower alcohol and higher acidity. The Cattleya wines are similar to Wayfarer in character, in that they offer rich, ripe flavors, yet in a balanced and charismatic style. Three wines were offered from the 2013 vintage, two of which are reviewed here, and the third is a Syrah from Soberanes Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands.



2013 Cattleya Wines Pratt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.69, 101 cases, \$70. Pratt Vineyard is one of Sonoma County's premier Chardonnay vineyards, owned and farmed by Jim Pratt. The vineyard was planted in 2000, and this wine is sourced from 4 rows of clone 15 (Old Wente selection). Carefully hand sorted, gently pressed, native yeast fermented for 2 months, followed by 100% malolactic fermentation. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light golden yellow color and clear in the glass. Welcoming aromas of lemon pudding, pineapple and vanilla creme. Creamy and delicious on the palate, with flavors of pear, kiwi and grilled pineapple augmented by hints of butterscotch and nutty oak, offering impressive fruit expression, and sliding off the palate with aplomb at the finish. So beautifully composed, one is tempted to drink it all night. 96.*

2013 Cattleya Wines Donum Vineyard Sonoma Carneros Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.65, 88 cases, \$70. Roederer clone. 25% whole clusters. 5-day cold soak, fermented on the skins for 18 days, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple hue in the glass. Nicely perfumed, with aromas of black cherry, blackberry, pomegranate and a deft touch of oak. Structured and somewhat bold, with earth-kissed flavors of black cherry and blackberry. The firm but polished tannins are nicely balanced by a riff of acidity propelling the finish. A classy wine that is built to age, and a proper salute to Carneros terroir. 93.*



2014 Cattleya Wines Cuvée Number One Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., very limited, unreleased. Sourced from Lakeview Vineyard in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Pommard and Dijon 115. Named after the successful first of many blending trials between both clones. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Intoxicating aromas of black cherry, cassis and bark. Exceptionally refined in the mouth with a velvety texture, featuring mid weight flavors of black raspberry, blackberry and plum. Impeccable balance with involved but not intrusive fine-grain tannins. and an intensely endowed finish. A gregarious and toothsome wine that is meant to please. 94.*

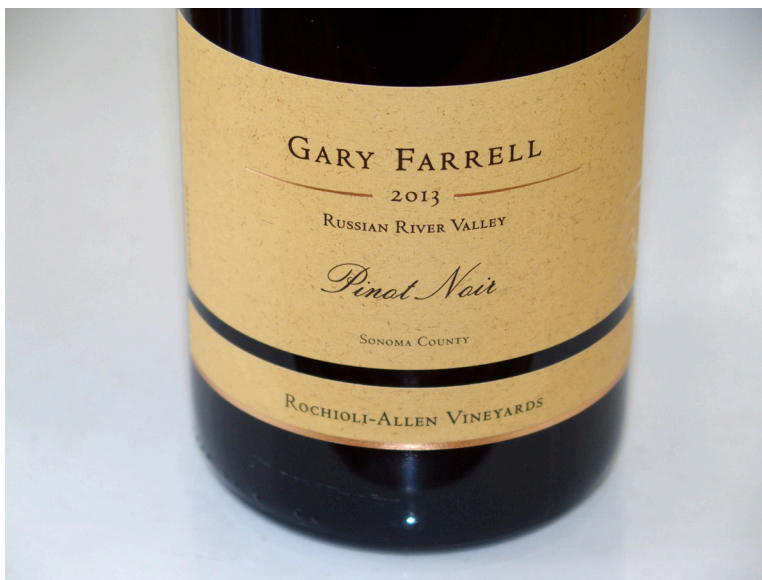


Sips of Recently Tasted Pinot Noir

2013 Gary Farrell Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.64, 588 cases, \$60. Released February 2016. Sourced from the Bacigalupi's Frost Ranch and Block 9 that is planted entirely to a Wente selection of Pinot Noir. Small % of whole clusters. 5 to 7-day cold soak, both punch downs and pump overs, 10 to 15-day extended post-fermentation extended maceration, aged 14 months on the primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. I was drawn to this wine immediately, with its forward aromas of perfectly ripe Bing cherries, cake spices and rose bush. A cherry bombast on the palate, with uncommon vivid and juicy character, flanked by integrated tannins. The best bottling of this vineyard designate to date that had me enamored by its freshness. 93.*



2013 Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.70, 414 cases, \$70. Released February 2016. Sourced from Rochioli Vineyard and Allen Vineyard located nearby on opposite sides of Westside Road. Predominantly Pommard from old (1974) and new (1996) Allen Vineyard plantings with the balance is Pommard from the Rochioli River Block. Small % of whole clusters, 5 to 7-day cold soak, inoculated fermentations, 10 to 15-day post-fermentation extended maceration, aged on primary lees for 14 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Nuances abound in this wine, with aromas of cherries, red rose petals, spice, earth and woodland. Lovely cherry flavor tip toes on entry, tap dances mid palate, and hip hops through a boisterous and remarkably sustained finish. A beautifully composed, harmonious wine that will please now yet enthrall for several years to come. 94.*



2013 Gary Farrell Westside Farms Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.7% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.68, 747 cases, \$50. Released February 2016. David Ramey grows Chardonnay on his 40-acre Westside Farms Vineyard. Clone 4 was planted in 1989 in deep, river-deposited sandy loam soils. Harvest Brix 22°-23°. Gently whole cluster pressed, inoculated ferment, aged 8 months on creamy lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light golden yellow color and clear in the glass. The lean nose offers demure aromas of cake spice, lemon-lime and apple. Much more expressive on the palate, with citrus-driven flavors that charm with brightness and integrate beautifully with a deft touch of oak. Vibrant and clean, with a refreshing lemon-driven finish, this is a soulful Chardonnay that will be marvelous at the dinner table. 92.*

Graton Ridge Cellars A producer of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir located in Sebastopol that was recently acquired by Furthermore Wines. The purchase included the Graton Ridge Cellars label, tasting room, winery and estate vineyard. Erica Stancliff will continue as winemaker. Both labels which will be available for tasting in the new home of Furthermore at 3561 Gravenstein Hwy N in Sebastopol. Visit www.furthermorewines.com and www.gratonridge.com.

2013 Graton Ridge Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$N/A. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, dried herbs and chalky earthy lead to a mid weight styled wine with flavors of Bing cherry, red berry, tobacco and oak char. Easy to drink, with silky tannins and a slightly tart cherry-driven finish which leaves a trail of oak. 87.*

2013 Graton Ridge Cellars Paul Family Estate Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$N/A. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Lovely marriage of Bing cherry, cola and sandalwood aromas. The delicious core of Bing cherry and strawberry fruits are nicely accented with brioche and baking spice flavors framed by suave tannins. A very sexy wine that is all satin in the mouth and impeccably balanced. 91.*

2013 Graton Ridge Cellars Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 241 cases, \$50. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Deep cherry pie and pie spice aromas lead to a mid weight core of attacking Bing cherry, strawberry and baking spice flavors. Beautifully composed, with matching tannins, deft oak management, and a generous finish. Quintessential Russian River Valley character. 92.*



Helioterra A small, artisan producer of Oregon and Washington wines crafted at Bjornson Vineyard in Salem, Oregon by winemaker Anne Ebenreiter Hubatch. The name draws on geological inspiration, symbolizing Heliolite, the Oregon gemstone. Also, Helio and Terra combine the Greek words for sun and earth, natural partners for grape growing. Anne is a Wisconsin native whose degree in Geology and Environmental Studies from the University of Wisconsin meant her career path would be connected to the land. Upon moving to Oregon, she had extensive wine training with Eric Hamacher (Hamacher Wines), David Adelsheim and Dave Paige (Adelsheim Vineyard), Joe Dobbles (Dobbles Family Estate), and Alfredo Apolloni (Apolloni Vineyards). Her first vintage under her own Helioterra label was 2009. Multiple varietals are produced including the two Pinot Noir blends reviewed here. Visit www.helioterrawines.com.

2014 Helioterra Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Demure, but pleasant aromas of black cherry and oak spice. Very tasty juice, featuring ornate flavors of black cherry, black berry and pomegranate framed by structured tannins, and finishing with a burst of juicy, dark berry fruit. Supple and polished. 90.*

2013 Helioterra Vintner's Select Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 125 cases, \$. *Best of the cellar. Native yeast fermentation, aged 11 months in French oak barrels. Light cherry red color in the glass. Fruity nose offering aromas of red cherry, cranberry and complimentary oak. Silky and charming on the palate, with a modest attack of red cherry and red berry fruits with savory bent. Well-concealed tannins, good cherry and oak counter play, finishing with some cherry goodness. A solid offering, but in this vintage lacks engaging fruit concentration. 89.*

Saffron Fields Vineyard Chemical engineers, Dr. Angela Summers and Sanjeev Lahoti, hail from Houston, Texas. As they became wine enthusiasts, they visited the Willamette Valley in 2003, met with a realtor and

found a grass seed farm on Laughlin Road in Yamhill near Willakenzie Estate, Lénne Estate and Deux Verts Vineyard in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA. They developed the property, traveling to the site several times a year, staying in a small shack on the vineyard. They planted the first 12 acres of Pommard clone Pinot Noir in 2007, and added 12 more acres in 2009. Today there are 32 acres of Pinot Noir (clones are Pommard, Wädenswil, 115, 667, 777, and "828") and 3 acres of Chardonnay (clones 76 and 548). The vineyard is dry farmed using sustainable practices (LIVE certified). Their initial grapes were bought by winemaker Tony Rynders who became their winemaker. The barn on the property was disassembled and the wood salvaged to be used in a tasting room constructed on site. The architecturally alluring and serene tasting room opened in 2013 and contains the owners' personal collection of contemporary art and houses art exhibits as well. A Japanese-styled garden, orchard, vegetable garden and sculpture garden were added.



2013 Saffron Fields Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., 300 cases, \$40. Released September 7, 2015. 39% Yamhill-Carlton, 33% Eola-Amity Hills, 17% Chehalem Mountains, and 11% Ribbon Ridge. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very shy nose, offering a hint of cherry fruit, but mainly woodland flora. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry, pomegranate, toasty oak and woody spice. Delicate, with suave tannins, and some uplifting cherry goodness on the finish. 88.*

2013 Saffron Fields Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 700 cases, \$55. Released September 7, 2015. Flagship bottling of 4 clones (Pommard, Wädenswil, 115, 777) from Saffron Fields Vineyard. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 39% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is quite engaging, with aromas of black cherry, blackberry, tea leaves and cassis. Juicy and flavorful, offering notes of blackberry, black raspberry and blueberry fruits with an earthy underpinning. The fruit is very expressive and expansive in the mouth, supported by well-concealed, finely ground tannins. The fruit seems to have been picked at the peak of ripeness. 91.*

2013 Saffron Fields Heritage Clones Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 501 cases, \$50. Released September 7, 2015. 100% Saffron Fields Vineyard. Pommard and Wädenswil clones. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose opens slowly to reveal enticing aromas of ripe strawberry, black cherry pie glaze, and dark red rose petal. The black cherry, black raspberry and mushu plum sauce flavors are front and center in this mid weight plus offering that combines pleasing extraction with well-honed and balanced tannins. The finish is particularly notable, with power and length that goes on and on. A charming wine with the guts to age. 93.*



Tessier Winery Owner and winemaker Kristie Tacey, CSW, founded her winery in 2009 to focus on small lots of Pinot Noir, Grenache and Viognier. I have reviewed past vintages with pleasure. Visit www.tessierwinery.com.



2014 Tessier After Hours California Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 50 cases, \$30. A blend of Saveria (Santa Cruz Mountains) and Morelli Lane (Russian River Valley) vineyards. Aged in neutral French oak barrels. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Lovely perfume of fresh cherries, cranberries and a hint of spicy oak. Light in weight, but flavorful, with a juicy core of cherry fruit framed by modest tannins. A forward, easy drinking wine that has commendable balance and a pleasingly silky finish.* **89.**

2014 Tessier Morelli Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 95 cases, \$39. Clones 114 and Pommard. Aged in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Deep aromas of black cherry with a bit of dried herbs. A mid weight complement of black cherry and black raspberry fruits aims to please, accented with echoes of oak, and backed by ripe fruit tannins that are in sync. The fruit persists through the mid palate to a vigorous finish of some note.* **91.**

2011 Wedell Cellars The Row Find Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.28, TA 0.668, 20 cases, \$110. New release. This wine is sourced from a small section of a renowned vineyard in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA and represents the very best barrel from 2011. 100% de-stemmed, 6-day cold soak, fermented in open top micro bins, gently pressed with a basket press with only free-run juice used. Aged on the lees 30 months in French oak, 48-month air-dried, second use. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruit aromas including blackest cherry, raisin and black currant. Soft and silky on the palate, with flavors of dried plum, blackberry and spice and a subtle riff of oak. Signature Sta. Rita Hills acidity makes for juicy drinking. An individualistic wine that has a mature character to the extended elevage, but has the acidity to last many years.* **90.**

2012 Wedell Cellars Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.67, 320 cases, \$75. New release. A blend of clones 5, 113, 115, 667 and 777 from Fiddlestix Vineyard. 100% de-stemmed, 3 to 6-day cold soak, 14 days on skins, gently basket pressed. The wine is more than 95% free-run juice. Aged on the lees almost 20 months. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of black cherry, tea, dark chocolate and toasty oak in a discreetly rich style featuring silky tannins, and a suave finish with some persistence.* **90.**

Windrun Vintners & Négociants A Buellton-based négociant offering wines from grapes grown in vineyards of Santa Barbara County and coastal California, that represent outstanding value. Industry veteran Ken Brown oversees the purchase, blending, finishing and bottling of these wines that are produced at Terravant Wine Co. Visit www.windrun.com.



2012 Windrun San Luis Obispo County Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.53, 1,648 cases, \$23. Sourced from Edna Valley vineyards. *Moderately light reddish purple hue in the glass. The deeply aromatic nose offers a very pleasing marriage of black raspberry, dark cherry and rose petal scents. Noticeable fruit presence and a deft touch of oak make this cherry-driven offering a delight. Nicely balanced, with a modest, but gratifying and elegant finish.* **89.**

2013 Windrun Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.68, 2,530 cases, \$23. A blend of 5 clones grown primarily in the Santa Maria Valley. Fermented in stainless steel and aged in new and used French and American oak barrels for 6 months. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of cherry, sandalwood, and tobacco lead to a middleweight styled wine with juicy flavors of cherries and purple berries. Easy to like, with bright acidity, mild tannins and a pleasing cherry-driven finish, although the oak overlay is a bit heavy-handed.* **88.**



2013 Windrun Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.67, 479 cases, \$33. A blend of 5 clones from the Lafond Vineyard (Pommard, 115, 777, "828," and 667). 100% de-stemmed, fermented in open tanks. Aged in neutral 500-liter puncheons for 10 months with complete malolactic fermentation in barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of blackberry jam and woodland lead to a full-bodied charge of blackberry and black raspberry fruit flavors with an earthy undertone. The prodigious fruit is framed by bold tannins that stick out a bit on the finish. A fruit-driven wine that is a bit one-dimensional, and the wine's devilish tannins supersede the acidity. That said, the fruit is ripe and luscious, and the fruit intensity really holds on to the finish.* **89.**



More Wines

[Noble Vines] 667 Monterey Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$13.99. Dijon clones. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is replete of fruit, offering scents of earth, mushroom and organic flora. Light to mid weight flavors of black cherry and black tea have an earthy underpinning. Forward drinking, with very modest tannins and a short finish.* **86.**

2013 Mark West Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$14.99. A Mark West Appellation Series wine. *Moderate dark reddish purple color in the glass. The uplifting aromas of blackberry, dark cherry and toasty oak hold up nicely over time in the glass. Plenty to like in this wine with mid weight flavors of black cherry, black tea and dark chocolate clothed in silky tannins. A solid drinker at a reasonable price that has Santa Lucia Highlands character.* **88.**

2014 Turtle Vines Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.79, TA 0.58, \$38. 80% Pommard and 20% Dijon 667 clones from an estate vineyard planted in 2010. 5% whole clusters. Aged in 13% new French oak. *Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. The nose is flush with earthy flora and savory herb aromas. The palate is more fruity, offering middleweight spiced cherry flavor with a pinch of smoky oak. Very sleek and silky with invisible tannins.* **89.**

Pinot Briefs

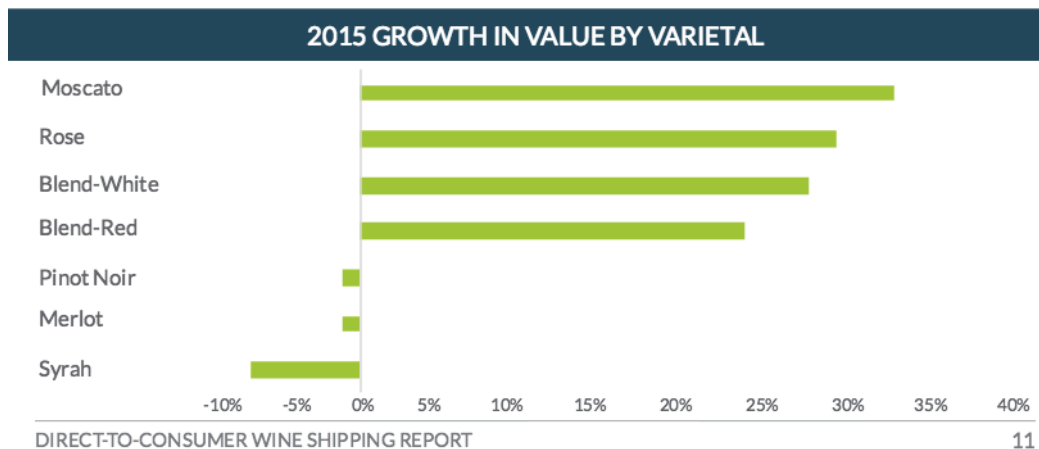
Castello di Amorosa acquires Pillow Rd. Vineyard This 9-acre Pinot Noir (clones Pommard 4, 777, Swan and Calera) and Chardonnay vineyard is located in Sonoma county's Green Valley of Russian River Valley just west of the town of Sebastopol. Former proprietors Pat and Anne Stotesbery created Ladera Vineyards on Howell Mountain in Napa Valley and offered Pinot Noir and Chardonnay under the Pillow Rd. Vineyard label. Dario Sittui also recently bought Burt Williams' Morning Dew Ranch Pinot Noir Vineyard in Anderson Valley.

IPNC 2016: Pinot Noir in the Antipodes This year's 30th Annual International Pinot Noir Celebration, July 29-31, 2016, will feature a Master Class in Australian Pinot Noir. The Masters of Ceremonies James Halliday will join presenters Michael Hill Smith and Tom Carson for Master Class: Australia. World-class Pinot Noir can be found within the vast island of Australia and I have written and reviewed the wines on occasion in the *PinotFile*. I have also traveled to the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria and can vouch for the high quality of the Pinot Noir produced there. James Halliday staked his claim in the Yarra Valley back in 1985 where he founded the now legendary Coldstream Hills. Michael Hill Smith found a niche for Pinot Noir at Tolpuddle Vineyard in the Coal River Valley in southeastern Tasmania. Tom Carson crafts his Pinot Noir in Tuerong, located in the northern reach of the Mornington Peninsula. Enjoy an extensive tasting of Australia's best Pinot Noirs, most of which seldom reach the United States (the Aussies like to keep it for themselves). For information and tickets, visit www.ipnc.org.



Experts Decide if Organic Wine Taste Better An article published in the *Journal of the American Association of Wine Economists* (No. 190, “Does Organic Wine Taste Better? An Analysis of Experts’ Ratings”). The authors note that little consensus exists whether eco-certified products are better than their conventional counterparts. This paper used data from three leading wine rating publications to assess quality for 74,148 wines produced in California between 1998 and 2009. The results indicated that eco-certification is associated with a statistically significant increase in wine quality rating.

Ship Compliant 2016 Direct-to-Consumer Wine Shipping Report Napa wineries reached an all-time high shipping record in 2015 with over \$1 billion worth of wine shipped directly to consumers. Consumers continued to favor Oregon wine, with its shipments surging by 14.6% in 2015. Massachusetts consumers ordered \$27.5 million worth of wine in the first year of legal direct-to-consumer shipping. Since 2010, the value of the direct-to-consumer industry has grown by 66%. Very small wineries (1,000 to 4,999 cases, which includes a large number of Pinot Noir producers) is composed of 40% of all US wineries and in 2015, these wineries overtook medium sized wineries for second place ranking of dollar value of wine shipped with a 13.3% growth. 2015 total sales were \$445 million. Pinot Noir decreased from 22% growth in volume to 2% growth in volume from 2014 to 2015.



U.S. Winery Growth Continues *Wine Business Monthly* and *Wines Vines Analytics* reported that the United States now has 8,702 wineries, up 415 from 8,287 last year, a 5 percent increase. 7,061 are bonded and 1,641 are virtual wineries. California leads with 4,054 wineries, Washington is second with 671, Oregon third with 439, and New York fourth with 339.

2016 World of Pinot Noir The 16th Annual World of Pinot Noir has announced dinners and chefs for the two day event as well as discounted lodging at the host Bacara Resort. Visit www.worldofpinotnoir.com.

Sip McMinnville Wine & Food Classic The 23rd Annual McMinnville Wine & Food Classic will be held March 11-13, 2016, inside the Evergreen Space Museum. Purchase wine by taste, glass, bottle or case. Participants include many small wineries featured in the *PinotFile*: Cardwell Hill Cellars, Hillcrest Vineyards, J Wrigley Vineyards, Left Coast Cellars, Potter’s Vineyards, Seufert Winery, Willamette Valley Vineyards. Watch some of area’s best chefs in the Northwest demonstrate their skills. For tickets, visit www.sipclassic.org.

2016 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition The competition received a record 7,162 entries, the highest number to date. 65 judges chose the best wines. The **Red Sweepstakes** Winners were 2013 Runquist Nostro Vino Vineyard Amador County Zinfandel and **2013 Sonnet Wine Cellars Tondre’s Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir. Best of Class** winners by price category for Pinot Noir: 2014 Navarro Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.50), 2013 SIMI Winery California Pinot Noir (\$23.99), 2014 Seven of Hearts Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$24), 2013 Balletto Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$29), 2014 Enjoy Premiere Vineyard Santa Barbara Pinot Noir (\$35), 2012 Bonneau Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$37.99), 2013 Sonnet Tondre’s Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir (\$40), 2014 Trattoria Grappolo Santa Barbara Pinot Noir (\$45), 2013 Pellegrini Toboni Oakwild Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$50), and 2012 Hyde Hyde Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir (\$65) tie with 2014 Westwood Estate Pommard Clone Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir (\$54). I haven’t formally reviewed the Sonnet Tondre’s Grapefield Pinot Noir since the 2010 vintage, but I loved it then so no surprise that the 2013 vintage won a Sweepstakes and Best of Class Award.

Fifth Annual Oregon Chardonnay Celebration 48 Oregon Chardonnay producers will be featured on February 27, 2016, at the Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg, Oregon. Chardonnay has quietly grown to be highly popular in Oregon and the quality of the wines have gained worldwide recognition. The International Pinot Noir Celebration is now guiding this event. This year's seminar will have Elaine Brown directing a focused tasting of five winemakers' interpretation of 2014 Durant Vineyard Chardonnay. On the day before, The Cuvée Stroll will be held also at the Allison Inn & Spa. This unique tasting event will feature a bounty of Oregon wineries, artisan food makers and beverage purveyors, and will benefit the Salud! Foundation. For tickets to the Chardonnay event, visit www.picatic.com/oregon/chardonnay (\$150 for seminar and tasting, \$75 for tasting). For The Cuvée Stroll, RSVP to info@theallison.com (\$25).



New Generic Top-Level Domaine Website Endings The newest website endings, .WINE and .VIN gYLDs are now available to the public for general registration through Donuts Inc., the largest registry for new “not-com” domain names. During the active two month sunrise period more than 1,300 brand owners and trademark holders registered .WINE and .VIN domains. Not-coms provide a more descriptive and creative means for domain owners to brand their business, products and services. Donuts is making available a wide variety of .WINE and .VIN domains such as Boutique.VIN, Sommelier.WINE, WhereToBuy.Wine and USA.WINE. For more information, visit www.donuts.domains.

Scientists Detail Pinot Noir Grape Aroma Profile as It Ripens A report in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* (“Quantitation of Thioprolines in Grape Wine by Isotope Dilution-Liquid Chromatography-Tandem Mass Spectrometry”) may give an option beyond Brix and acidity in determining quality of grapes at harvest time. Michael C. Qian and Fang Yuan wanted to develop a way to determine maturity based on aroma. The researchers identified 49 main odor compounds in young and ripe Pinot Noir grapes from two consecutive years, 2012 and 2013, using gas chromatography mass spectrometry. Four odor compounds (thioprolines) were consistently found in mature grapes. Unfortunately, the full article is only available to subscribers.

PinotFile is a Great Resource The *PinotFile* website is unique and innovative among all wine review websites for many features that I believe are underutilized. It is probably the largest general Pinot Noir database on the planet. Let me point out some of the features:``

- (1) Almost 2500 wineries (primarily North American) are profiled in the Winery Directory. The list is continuously being updated and new wineries added almost daily. Winery search can be conducted by appellation or region or by name.
- (2) The Vineyard Directory includes detailed profiles of 1554 California and Oregon Pinot Noir vineyards. This listing is far from complete, but is an ongoing project.
- (3) Wine reviews may be searched by newsletter, winery, appellation or vineyard. Say, you like Pinot Noir from Bien Nacido Vineyard. You can search for all reviews of wines made from this vineyard. Also, “Notable” Pinot Noir and Chardonnay reviews can be searched (wines with highest scores or recommendations).
- (4) Wineries can link any article or review to their own website by following instructions on each winery’s profile in the Winery Directory.
- (5) A full listing of Pinot Noir festivals is available.
- (6) The Travel Directory (Pinot Trail Travel) includes recommended wineries to visit, lodging, restaurants, activities, etc for each of California and Oregon’s major Pinot Noir winegrowing regions. This entry is continually being updated.
- (7) A listing and link to Grape Radio podcasts I have participated in and recordings at events I have attended over the years since 2006.