



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

2016 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Technical Conference

I was honored to moderate and present at this year's 19th Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Technical Conference, held Friday, May 20, in Boonville at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds and sponsored by the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association.

19TH ANNUAL ANDERSON VALLEY PINOT NOIR TECHNICAL CONFERENCE

Friday, May 20, 2016



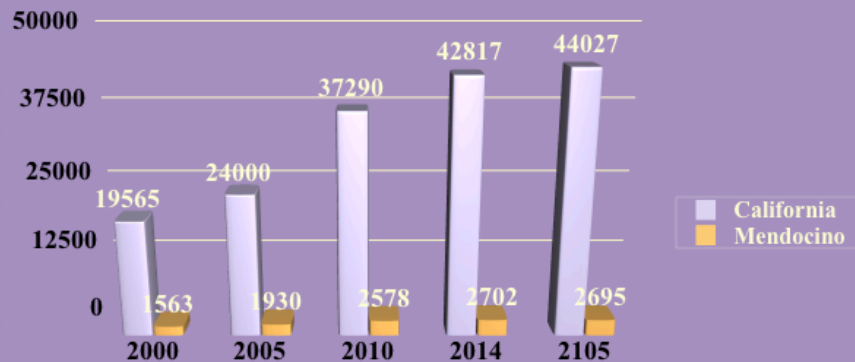
Tradition has it that the Technical Conference leads with a presentation titled "Annual State of Pinot Noir," by Glenn McGourty, Winegrowing and Plant Science Advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension Mendocino and Lake Counties, but Glenn was recovering from surgery and could not attend. Instead, Devon Jones, Executive Director of the Mendocino County Farm Bureau, relayed his presentation through his slides, and copies are included here for reference.

I have also included my two presentations given at the Technical Conference, "Anderson Valley Enjoys Newfound Perception of Quality," and "Back to the Future: A Look at 2015 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Yet to be Released."

Annual State of Pinot Noir

Prepared by Glenn McGourty

Pinot Noir Acreage Trend, 2000-2015



Pinot Noir acreage continues to increase statewide. Mendocino acreage remains pretty flat while large plantings have occurred in the Central Coast and Central Valley.

Pinot Noir Harvest 2015

- Frost, drought and poor set reduced crops in the North and Central Coasts:

North Coast: -22 % less fruit

Central Coast: -34 %

Vintage 2015 was not an easy year for many wine regions. The Central Coast suffered after four years of drought as well as very poor weather during a compressed bloom season. Many vineyards harvested one ton per acre or less of red varieties. In the North Coast, Anderson Valley suffered drought, freeze, dehydration and poor set. The Russian River Valley yields were reduced by more than 45% of the previous year's good yields.

Pinot Noir Harvest, 2015

- Pinot Noir Harvested 2014: 245,751 tons
- Pinot Noir harvested 2015: 184,235 tons
- Difference: -25%

Top Pinot Noir Counties

County	Acreage	Tons Produced	Average Price / Ton
Sonoma	12,281	18,797	\$ 3530
Monterey	9,438	22,283	\$ 1802
Santa Barbara/ SLO	5,223/ 2,097	10,279	\$ 2997
Napa	2,869	3,876	\$ 2711
Mendocino	2,695	2,333	\$ 2995
TOTAL COASTAL	36,700	57,568	\$1802-3530
Central Valley	14,687	62,994	\$443-710

The Central Valley has less than half the Pinot Noir acreage of coastal counties, but puts out more fruit into the marketplace. Cheap too!

California Wine Grapes Average Price Per Ton, Total Tons, 2015

Variety	Total Tons Crushed	Value/Ton
Pinot Noir	245,751	\$1,624
Cabernet	510,178	\$1,426
Merlot	282,300	\$774
Zinfandel	355,598	\$623
Syrah	114,297	\$765
Rubired	242,153	\$303
Chardonnay	718,023	\$868

On an average per ton basis, Pinot Noir is the most valuable grape grown in California.

Market Outlooks:

- Good coastal Pinot noir is in short supply
- Prices are strong for bulk wine, not many transactions
- Central Coast has good prices, movement
- California Appellation bulk Pinot noir is so-so, more interest in 2016 vintage (it won't taste very good, either!)

Central Valley Pinot Noir is of low quality and will eventually damage the image of California Pinot Noir as a fine wine. This has happened with Syrah, Sangiovese and most recently Zinfandel.

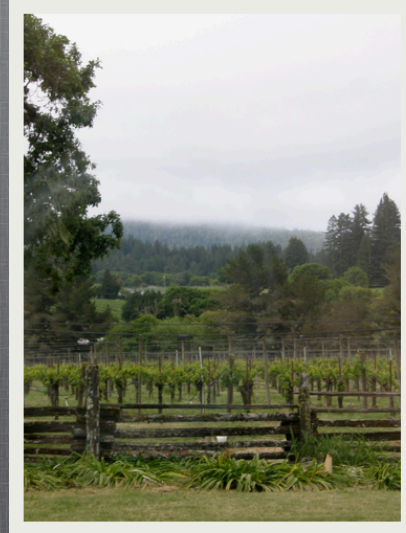
Anderson Valley Enjoys Newfound Perception of Quality

Rusty Gaffney, MD

ANDERSON VALLEY ENJOYS NEWFOUND PERCEPTION OF QUALITY

"um, it's a hard grape to grow, as you know...And in fact, it can only grow in these really specific, little, tucked away corners of the world. And only the most patient and nurturing of growers can do it, really."

'Sideways'



MATT KRAMER WROTE IN NEW CALIFORNIA WINE IN 2004,
"ANDERSON VALLEY IS ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S MOST
DESIRABLE PINOT NOIR LOCALES. THE RESULTS, HOWEVER,
ARE NOT YET IN, SO THIS REMAINS (OPTIMISTIC)
SPECULATION."

PINOT AFICIONADOS WOULD NOW AGREE THAT ANDERSON VALLEY PINOT NOIR STANDS WITH THE BEST CALIFORNIA HAS TO OFFER AND THERE IS NO LONGER ANY NEED TO SPECULATE

WINEMAKER BOB CABRAL NOTED RECENTLY, "LET'S NOT FORGET THAT PEOPLE IN ANDERSON VALLEY HAVE COME SO FAR IN A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. THEIR LOVE OF GRAPE GROWING AND RESPECT FOR THE LAND ARE UNPRECEDENTED."

Since I first wrote at length about Anderson Valley Pinot Noir in 2007, the perception of quality has changed dramatically. Back then, Anderson Valley Pinot Noir grape prices were among the lowest in California.

2007: \$2,083 /ton average Mendo Cty

2012: \$2,705, above price of Pinot Noir grapes in Napa Valley

2015: \$2,901 /ton average Mendo Cty

*AV Pinot Noir prices will be above these figures



2015 Crop Year Final Crush Report:
Pinot Noir Average Price/Ton

Lodi.....	\$680
Monterey.....	\$1,814
Napa.....	\$2,648
Mendocino County.....	\$2,901
Santa Luis Opispo/Santa Barbara.....	\$2,955
Sonoma.....	\$3,519

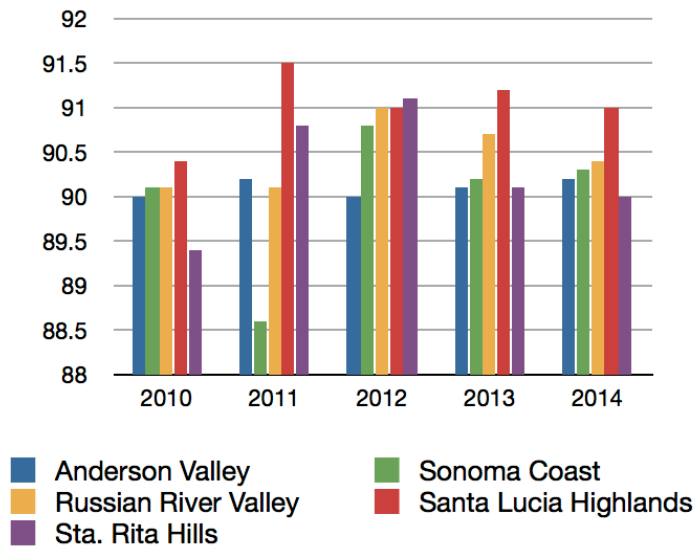
For Anderson Valley exact figures not available but costs of Pinot Noir per ton in 2015 were much higher than in “normal” years when considering the per acre costs of farming.

Acre contracts saw cost per ton increase dramatically due to low yields. Contracts based on a price per ton didn't see much change in price unless special stipulation in contract. In latter case, the farmer lost out, sometimes with big losses.

So, there was very wide range of prices per ton when factor in both types of contracts. Estimated average was \$3,500 with 'high end' Pinot Noir somewhere between \$3,200-\$12,000 per ton

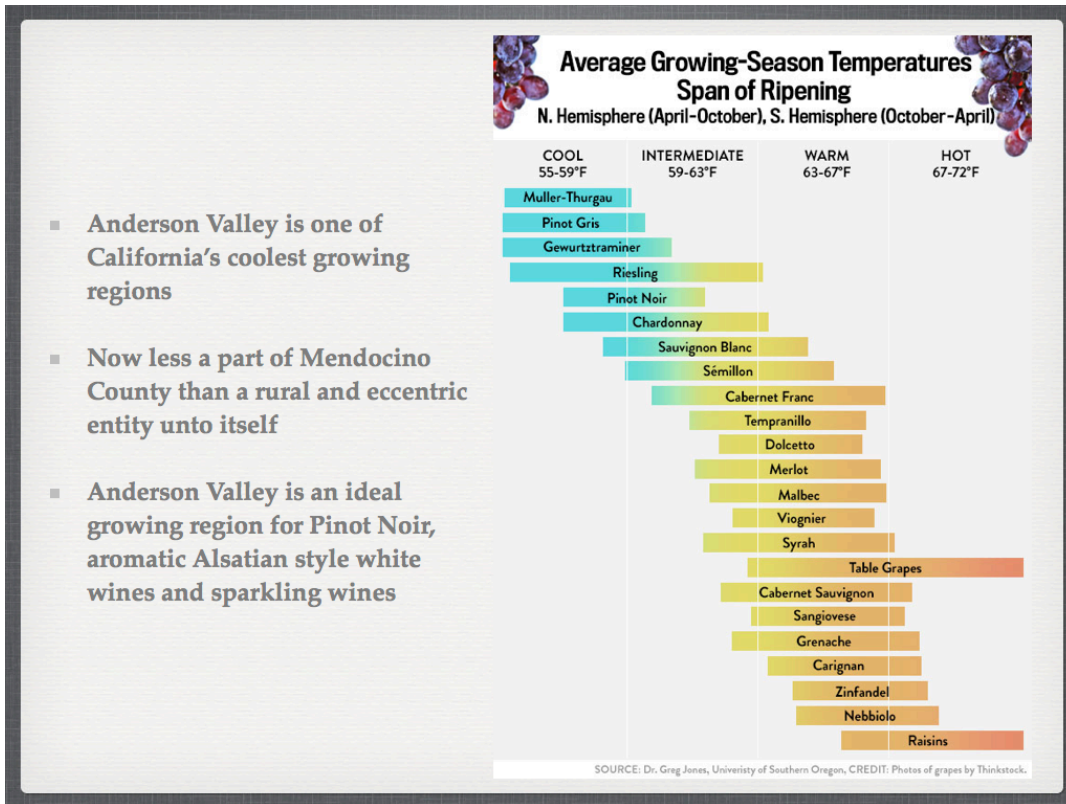


Average Scores, 2010-2014



Although the visible infrastructure in Anderson Valley never seems to change, and for many that is its charm, the winegrowing business is vibrant, evolving and prosperous, and the wines are among those most treasured in California, not only by the pinotphile cognoscenti, but the general consumer as well.





- Anderson Valley is one of California’s coolest growing regions
- Now less a part of Mendocino County than a rural and eccentric entity unto itself
- Anderson Valley is an ideal growing region for Pinot Noir, aromatic Alsatian style white wines and sparkling wines

TERROIR IDEAL FOR PINOT NOIR

- **Soils:** clay-based alluvial variations of Mendocino Series soils: Pinole Gravelly Loam, Josephine Loam and Hugo Gravelly Loam with pockets of sandy loam and sandstone
- **Climate:** Warm days and cool nights with cooling air currents from the Pacific Ocean in the mid-afternoon. Mostly Winkler Region 1. In summer and fall gradient temperature drops dramatically as drive north on Hwy 128 (about 8°-10°)
- **Water:** Most vineyards need frost protection and most use overhead sprinklers for frost protection so water is a hot topic. Irrigation is stingy and only used when needed to preserve water. Annual rainfall 45”-60”.
- **Monoculture:** healthy vines, fruit trees, birds and animals in harmony.

ANDERSON VALLEY 2015 VINEYARD CENSUS (AVWA)

- Vineyard Properties: 91 (owned by 71 farmers)
- Planted acres: 2,502 (1990 to 2009 increase of 1,709 acres)
- Average vineyard: 27.5 acres (26 < 5 acres, 3 > 100 acres). Median vineyard 11.5 acres
- Pinot Noir: 1,736 acres (87 vnyds)
- Chardonnay (559), Gewürz (103), Merlot (73), Pinot Gris (41), Riesling (22). Total of 13 varieties



WHY NOT MORE PINOT NOIR PLANTED IN ANDERSON VALLEY?

- Not much clear land still available
- Land owners not open to selling
- Water usage and drainage a challenges
- Maximum potential vineyard acreage in Anderson Valley probably 3,000 acres



ANDERSON VALLEY 2015 WINERY CENSUS (AVWA)

- 30 bonded, local wineries in Anderson Valley (Baxter, Drew and Phillips Hill are technically in Mendocino Ridge AVA)
- 32 tasting rooms open to public or by appointment
- More wineries than ever sourcing Anderson Valley grapes, some exclusively and several predominantly from Anderson Valley. Most are established names (i.e. Anthill Farms, Arista, Bailiwick, Cakebread, Copain, Coulour, CrossBarn, E16, Fulcrum, La Crema, Lede Family, LIOCO, Littorai, Long Meadow, MacPhail, Rhys, The Donum Estate, Twomey, V. Sitturi, Waits-Mast, Williams Selyem, WindRacer, Woodenhead). I estimate a total of about 50 wineries source Anderson Valley fruit.

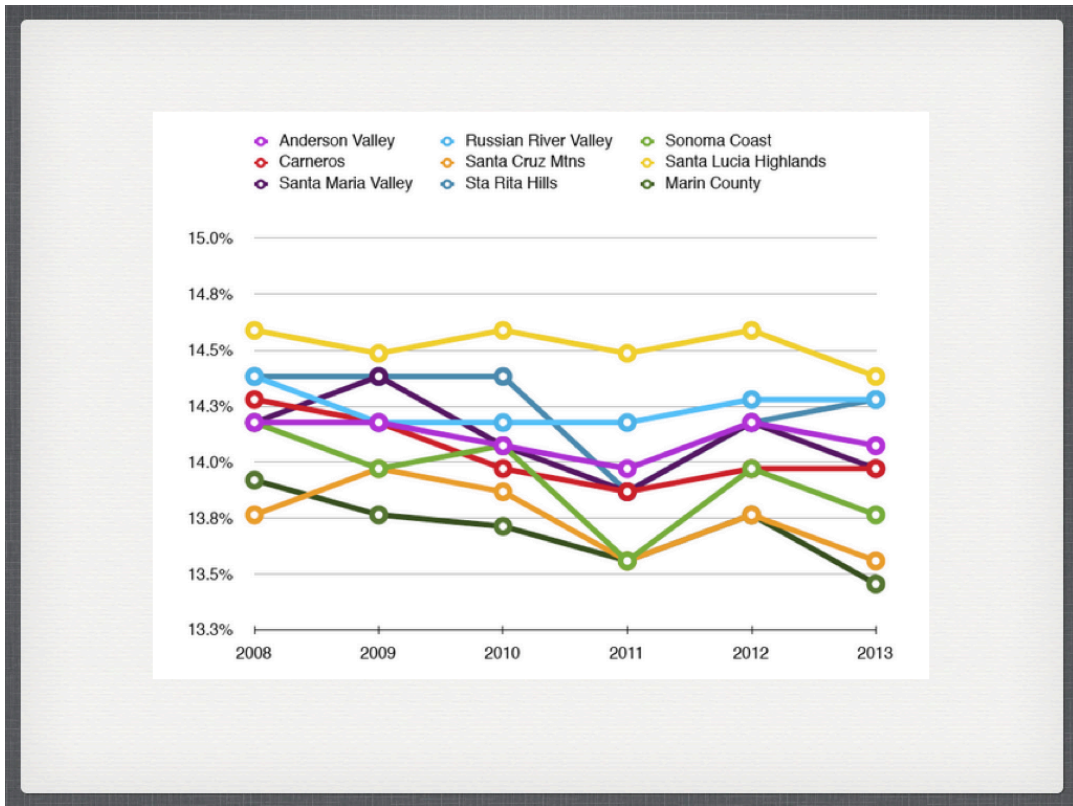
WHAT MAKES ANDERSON VALLEY PINOT NOIR SPECIAL?

Anderson Valley is capable of producing a wide range of styles of Pinot Noir depending on the vintage and winemaker's choices, but within stylistic differences, two constants are readily apparent.

(1) The wines can have lower alcohols than their counterparts from warmer growing areas within California.

(2) Because of the cool climate, Pinot Noir grapes slowly ripen, achieving full phenolic ripeness without high sugar, while still retaining bright acidity.

Some have likened the Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs more to those from the Willamette Valley, and have even anointed Anderson Valley "Baja Oregon."



GENERALIZATIONS

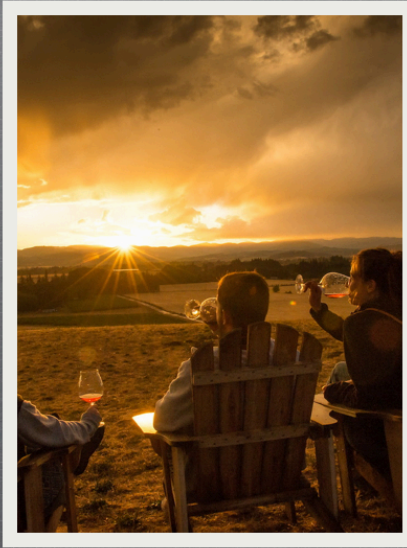
Valley floor Pinot Noir: soils are deeper, wines are lighter and more fruit driven

Rocky slopes Pinot Noir: more structured, earthy, "mineral" in style

Near Boonville: lush red cherry fruit, rounder tannins, bigger textures, great acidity

Western end: more earthy, spice, angular tannins and racy acidity

Winemaking is impressive, but it is the soils and climate of the Anderson Valley, that is terroir, that is at work here. Dirk van der Niepoort said, "While 'good' wines are 50% terroir and 50% winemaking, 'great' wines owe far more to terroir."



Back to the Future: A Look at 2015 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Yet to be Released

Rusty Gaffney, MD

These slides represent a brief synopsis of the findings from the Winemakers' Technical Conference held on Thursday, May 19, featuring 2015 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir barrel samples.

BACK TO THE FUTURE: A LOOK AT 2015 ANDERSON VALLEY PINOT NOIR YET TO BE RELEASED

Discussion of the findings from Thursday, May 19, Winemakers' Technical Conference, looking at 2015 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir barrel samples



2015 VINTAGE IN ANDERSON VALLEY: A GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS VINTAGE

- **Good news:** Quality and purity of fruit already very evident. Wines show all hallmarks of great Anderson Valley Pinot Noir: equal parts lushness and beauty, with added nuances of rustic savory notes and a touch of wildness. The wines are structured and quite concentrated. Pinot Noir was a standout up and down the Anderson Valley.
- **Bad news:** After three years of higher than average yields, the 2015 yields in Anderson Valley were generally down by about 15% overall which was better than California as a whole (Pinot Noir harvest in 2014 was 245,751 tons and in 2015 184,235 tons, a difference of -25%). Yields were about 15% to 25% off the 10-year average for Anderson Valley.

- Low yields attributed to unseasonably cool weather during early bloom. Mostly overcast, cold, windy and humid conditions entire month of May.
- The result uneven and poor set in many vineyards, smaller grape clusters and variable crop size.
- Angel Camp Vineyard yields down 35% from normal. Morning Dew Ranch a mere half ton/acre. There was variability, however, with Balo Vineyard managing ave 2 tons/acre, while Black Kite Vineyard had the largest yields ever.
- The fourth year of drought may also have been a factor.



2015 VINTAGE IN ANDERSON VALLEY: EVEN BAD NEWS NOT THAT BAD

- After three vintages in a row of abundant crops, a return to normal crop size meant that more precise and ideal picking decisions could be made.
- One of earliest seasons on record with early bud break and early harvest (Goldeneye started estate harvest August 13, the winery's earliest start, and finished September 14, the winery's earliest finish). Early harvest is a blessing in Anderson Valley because of the potentially very cold and wet mid-October weather.
- During growing season there were three heat spikes and a touch of rain but did not impact quality. What did shape quality were the extended periods of ideal weather with days in the mid-80s and nights hovering around 45°F.

FORMAT OF WINEMAKERS' CONFERENCE

- Each winemaker asked to submit a barrel sample of one 2015 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir from any vineyard or combination of vineyards. All wines were analyzed by ETS laboratories. Total wines submitted:
- Producers both from within and outside Anderson Valley
- 25 winemakers tasted wines blind in small groups where they were critically evaluated
- Discussion of wines, looking for trends in the 2015 vintage, as well as achieving the goal of improving the overall quality of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

Press Tasting of Current Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Releases

An exclusive Press Tasting of current Anderson Valley Pinot Noir releases was held concurrently with the Technical Conference at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds Dining Hall. Here are reviews of the wines offered as well as a few additions, totaling 41 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs. The most striking feature of this tasting is that there were very few mediocre wines.

2014 Balo Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., 454 cases, \$45. *Inviting aromas of purple berries, rose petal and a hint of oak barrel. Mid weight plus in style with a succulent array of cherry, black raspberry and spice fruit flavors that have a slight confectioned tone due to sweet oak. Very seductive with a bombastic fruit finish of extraordinary length that is off the charts. 93.*



2013 Baxter Langley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 125 cases, \$48. *Moderately light reddish purple hue in the glass. The perfume of crushed cherries and exotic spices is eager to please upon opening. Lighter in weight, featuring flavors of red cherry and spice framed by balanced tannins. Good grip and intensity on the long, sweet cherry driven finish. 90.*

2014 Bink Wines Filligreen Farm Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 98 cases, \$55. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Satisfying aromas of cherry, rose petal, baking spice, sandalwood and chalk lead to a mid weight styled wine strutting flavors of blueberry, black cherry, spice and subtle oak in an elegant style. Flavors veer to the riper said, but never find over ripeness. 90.*



2013 Brutocao Cellars Slow Lope'n Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 1,875 cases, \$24. Family owners have been farming in southern Mendocino County since 1943. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers a pleasing blend of fruit black cherry and savory earthy flora and herb aromas. Beautifully composed with vivid flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and spice framed by chalky, fine grain tannins, and finishing with modest length. An engaging wine that also represents enviable value. 91.*

2012 Brutocao Cellars Reservad' Argento Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 350 cases, \$N/A. A barrel selection offered in a reserve style. *Shy, brooding aromas of black fruits and dark chocolate. A bolder styled wine with plenty of black raspberry, blackberry and Hoison sauce flavors backed by wood spice and a tinge of blood orange. Nicely balanced, with fine grain tannins and impressive staying power on the sweet fruited finish. 92.*

2014 Cakebread Cellars Two Creeks Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., \$42. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. This wine is heavily oak infused with aromas of tobacco and toast and caramelized wood flavors on the palate. Mid weight plus styled, with a gorgeous core of black stone and berry fruits, this wine finds good mid palate saturation and follow through with an intensely fruited finish. I have tasted several vintages of Cakebread Cellars Pinot Noir and the heavy tug of oak is typical. 88.*

2013 Champ de Rêves Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 4,995 cases, \$45. Clones 667, 777 and 115. Aged 9 months in 32% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry goodness with a hint of sweet oak. Darker fruited in a mid weight styled wine with flavors of purple berries, blueberries, pomegranate and oak spice with a hint of edible flower. Soft and seamless on the palate,*

with integrated tannins and a subtle herbal oak thread in the background. **89.** (This bottle is showing better than one reviewed in June 2016 that scored **87**)



2014 Couloir Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., \$N/A. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. This wine really impresses with aromas of muddled black cherry and raspberry, along with spice and wooded forest infusions. The aromas achieve more penetration with time in the glass. Mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, blackberry and spice satisfy with added accents of dark caramel and char from oak. Intriguing and beautifully balanced, with a seductive velvety texture that makes you want to pour this syrupy Pinot on your waffle. **94.**



2014 Donkey & Goat Helluva Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., 185 cases, \$34. Feral fermentation, aged in older French oak barrels. "Nothing but grapes and SO2." Unfined and unfiltered. Moderate reddish purple hue in the glass. Aromas of cherry, nori and stem lead to a wine that displays purpose and focus on the palate, featuring a core of cherry fruit back by noticeable but supportive oak. The flavor reminds of freshly picked grapes. The wine has a commendable acid spine and a noteworthy finish that refuses to relinquish its hold. **91.**



2013 Donum Estate Grown Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 423 cases, \$69. Sourced from Angel Camp Vineyard located in the deep end of the Anderson Valley. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. A darkly fruited wine with deep aromas of blackberry and cassis with noticeable oak driven toast and vanilla. Bold and sappy due to an extended maceration, with a charge of succulent purple and blackberry fruits accented with a thread of oak. A fruit-forward, husky wine in the Donum style. **91.**

2014 Drew The Fog Eater Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$45. Fog-eater is a regional term used by the early settlers of Anderson Valley. This wine brings together several lots from Balo and Filigreen vineyards. Clones 777, 667, 115 and Pommard. 15% whole cluster. Feral fermentation. Aged in 16% new French oak barrels. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is alive with pungent herbs, subtle oak and faint cherry aromas. Light to mid weight flavors of dark red cherry, cranberry, savory herbs and pencil lead are robed in soft tannins and energetic acidity. Forward drinking, with a pleasing cut of citrus on the finish. **90.**

2014 Drew Balo Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$48. Sourced from a 7-acre organically farmed vineyard located in Philo that was planted in 2001. Pommard, 115, 777 and Martini clones. Yields 1.9 tons per acre. 40% whole cluster fermentation. Feral fermentation. Aged in seasoned French oak barrels. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. This wine is slow to evolve without decanting, offering much more charm when sampled the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Both fruity and savory on the nose and palate, with gregarious fruit flavors of boysenberry, black cherry and plum framed by prominent but not aggressive tannins. The fruit is particularly notable for its purity and vibrancy both on the mid palate and finish. The oak treatment is obvious at this young age but was much less intrusive the following day upon re-tasting. I would suggest this wine, like many of Drew's 2014 Pinot Noirs, needs more time in bottle for full enjoyment. **93.**

2014 Drew Morning Drew Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., 166 cases, \$60. Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Savory and fruit aromas mix amicably including black raspberry, black cherry, allspice, bark, underbrush and floral bouquet. Complex and interesting in a mid weight plus style featuring flavors of black raspberry, pomegranate, black cherry and subtle oak. A refined herbal note secondary to whole cluster plies the background. An intense attack leads to a lingering, sweet fruited finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the nose was replete with rose petal and spice, and the flavors of dry cherry and sweet tobacco carried through a vibrant finish. **93.**



2014 Drew Estate Field Selections Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$60. Inaugural release from Drew's estate site location 3.3 miles from the Pacific Ocean at 1,250 feet elevation. The site was carefully chosen after years of research. The soils are ideal ocean floor decomposed sandstone and shale, high in iron and quartzite with a perfect ration of sand, gravelly loam and clay. Marginal fertility combined with excellent water holding capacity but good drainage. Pommard, 943, 115, Swan, 667 and Mt. Eden clones. Yields 0.5 to 1 ton per acre. 20% whole cluster fermentation. Feral fermentation. Aged in 30% new French oak barrels. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. A highly savory wine offering aromas and flavors of cherry, strawberry, spice, pipe tobacco, and pungent herbs. Intense on the attack, with a cleansing, citrus-fueled finish. The tannins are a bit rugged and unrefined at this early stage and need time to mellow. The wine was much more endearing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle but remained a highly savory offering.* **92.**



2013 Elke Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 150 cases, \$36. Five clones, unfined and unfiltered. Winemaker is Matt Evans. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and pine needle in this forested tone wine. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry and cranberry with an underlying earthy, woody thread. Balanced and juicy, with a modest finish. More expressive and outgoing the following day when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **90.**

2013 Expression Ordway Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 125 cases, \$50. From a sustainably farmed vineyard located at the western end of the Anderson Valley. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of blackberry, blueberry and pomegranate are bold in this mid weight plus styled wine full of seductive fruit and graced with a rapturous mouthfeel. Detracting from the experience is a heavy overlay of oak vanillin and a mild alcohol induced lip burn on the finish.* **89.**

2013 Fathers and Daughters Ella's Reserve Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 70 cases, \$42. Clones are Pommard, "828," and Wädenswil 2A. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. Winemaker is Phillip Baxter. *Moderately light cherry red color in the glass. Lovely perfume of fresh red cherries and spice. The mid weight flavors of cherry and cranberry are slightly shallow upon opening but pleasing. The tame tannins and harmony make for easy drinking. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine exhibited more powerful fruit flavors persisting through a generous finish.* **90.**

2013 FEL Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., 2,347 cases, \$38. A blend of several clones from several Anderson Valley vineyards. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 38% new. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruited aromas of fig, raisin, blackberry jam and a hint of vanilla. Full-bodied and ultra ripe in character featuring an array of black fruits and a note of bacon infused dark chocolate. Very concentrated and sappy, but balanced with a soothing texture. A bit of astringency returns at the end of the finish* **89.** (I reviewed this wine previously May 2015 and was more praising, with a score of **91** then)

2014 Ferrari-Carano Sky High Ranch Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 352 cases, \$48. Grapes are grown high above the fog line at 1,600 feet elevation. 100% de-stemmed. Various proprietary yeast strains introduced to fermentation. Aged 10 months in a mix of 58% new and 42% older French oak barrels. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of blueberry-pomegranate, sarsaparilla and sous-bois lead to a very sleek and suave offering featuring a plethora of blue and black fruits accented with oak seasoning. Impeccably balanced, with fine-grain tannins and a joyful finish filled with flavors of dark chocolate coated dark fruits.* **92.**

2013 Foursight Charles Vineyard "Clone 05" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 125 cases, \$49. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. An explosion of high brow cherry, dark red rose petal, root beer and toast leads off. Silky on the palate with a discreetly concentrated core of juicy cherry flavor with a hint of oak plying the background. The tannins are fine grain and the overall impression is one of sleekness and purity. The length of the finish puts this wine in an upper category.* **93.** (Previously reviewed on another occasion with a score of **94**)

2014 Fulcrum Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 152 cases, \$57. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. This wine opens slowly in the glass to reveal aromas of cherry, spice and forest stream, and luscious flavors of dark red cherries and berries that are well-spiced. The cozy texture is mesmerizing much like a soft robe, the balance is spot on, and the finish is quite sleek.* **92.**

2013 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 14,297 cases, \$55. 95% estate fruit from four vineyards (5% from Elke Donnelly Creek Vineyard). Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 70% new. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. A perfume of black cherry, blueberry, pomegranate and blackberry fruits is replicated on the palate with added accents of spice and savory herbs. Soft in the mouth and easy to drink, with a deft touch of oak and modest tannins that allow for early drinking.* **90.**

2013 Greenwood Ridge Hundred Point Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 100 cases, \$50, screwcap. *Moderately light reddish purple hue in the glass. Aromas of cherry, fermenting grapes, hollow barrel and baking spice lead off. The mid weight charge of fresh cherry and black raspberry fruits grab hold and persist through a generous finish. The silky texture is noteworthy, and some cinnamon spice enhances the flavor experience.* **91.**

2013 Husch Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 130 cases, \$38. Clones 115 and Wädenswil 2A. 30% whole cluster, Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. This wine has still not shed the significant new oak veneer. Aromas of black cherry and oak spice lead to a mid weight core of rustic and earthy black raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors underlain with notes of pine, cedar and oak. A unique wine that will please lovers of feral and woodland character.* **90.**

2009 Knez Estate Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., 325 cases, \$36. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of sous-bois, tinderbox and tobacco lead to a mid weighted wine featuring flavors of black cherry, smoky oak and tertiary savory characters that come with aging. The tannins have melded, and the finish still offers pleasing fruit and spice.* **89.**

2014 La Rochelle Deer Meadows Vineyard Recherché Reserve Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 180 cases, \$125 (Club member exclusive). Swan, Calera and Dijon 667 clones. Winemaker is veteran Tom Stutz. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Highly savory and pungent on the nose with cherry aromas in the background. The mid weight cherry flavor is underpinned with a vegetal character and framed by muscular tannins that stick out on the modest finish.* **87.**

2015 Lazy Creek Vineyards Anderson Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.30, TA 0.62, RS .025%, \$22. Grapes were de-stemmed, crushed and cold soaked on skins for 6 hours before pressing. The press juice was sent to tank for fermentation, blended in January and bottled. *Moderate pink hue in the glass. Enticing aromas of blood orange, strawberry, apple and watermelon juice. A fuller-bodied style of rosé featuring flavors of yellow cherry, blood orange and watermelon with the slightest dried herb note. Slightly creamy in texture with good verve, and the slightest bit of alcoholic warmth on the finish.* **89.**

2014 Lazy Creek Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc, pH 3.83, TA 0.51, 422 cases, \$60. Aged in 68% new and 32% older French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose leads with hi-tone aromas of black cherry, black grape, anise and smoky spices. The tasty core of black cherry, black raspberry, blackberry, spice and smoky oak flavors arrive with purpose on the mid palate and persist through a fruit-laden finish. Some more bottle age will integrate the oak overlay further but the wine is very enjoyable now.* **92.**

2014 Lazy Creek Vineyards Middleridge Ranch Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.79, TA 0.53, 418 cases, \$48. 120-acre property planted to 22 acres of heritage selections and Dijon clones. 100% de-stemmed, various proprietary yeast fermentation, aged 10 months in 60% new and 40% older French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The aromas build in the glass over time, offering pleasing dark Bing cherry and wooded path notes. The wine offers a palate of juicy dark red and purple berries enhanced with toasted oak veneer. Silky in the mouth, with modest tannins and a pleasant, modestly long finish.* **90.**

2014 Lazy Creek Vineyards "Five Barrel" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 15.2% alc., pH 3.75, TA 0.56, 115 cases, \$85. A blend of the five favorite barrels in the cellar from two blocks of the estate vineyard, clones 667 and Pommard. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 80% new. Racked only once before bottling. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark crimson color in the glass. Aromas of muddled black cherries and blueberries lead to a mid weight plus styled wine offering an intense and sappy attack of blueberry-pomegranate fruit flavor backed by structured tannins. A hedonistic offering yet has seamless bearing on the palate except for the finish when some alcoholic warmth appears especially as the wine warms in the glass.* **91.**



2014 Lichen Estate Moonglow Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 732 cases, \$35. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. This wine reminds me of cherry pie day at baking school with a hearty core of black cherry and baking spices that infuse the nose and palate. The silky tannins create a luxurious mouthfeel, and the balance is spot-on. Simply put, a beautifully composed wine with ornate fruit flavors. 93.*



2014 Maryetta Wines Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 48 cases, \$38. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose offers scents of dark cherry, blueberry, underbrush, petrol and a slight note of prune. Modest in weight, with a flavorful core of black cherry fruit with noticeable oak input. Silky in texture, with soft, chalky tannins, and a juicy finish that lacks a little intensity. 89.*

2014 Navarro Vineyards Deep End Blend Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 1,355 cases, \$55. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Complex array of aromas greet the drinker including black cherry, exotic spices and oak barrel driven anise and char notes. A dark cherry bombast with accents of savory herbs and sweet oak, leading to a lip-smacking, black raspberry infused finish. 90.*



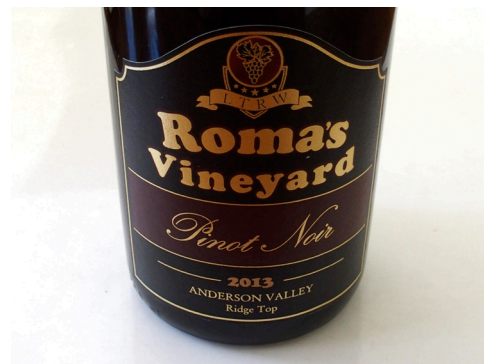
2014 Nelson Hill Deep End Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 279 cases, \$42. *Clones 114, 115, 777 and Pommard. Moderately dark reddish purple color in the glass. The nose exhibits great cherry purity and persists over time in the glass. Flat-out delicious attack of black cherry fruit that envelopes the palate and persists through a grand finish. Sleek, refined and harmonious with modest, slightly burly and chalky tannins, and a deft compliment of oak. This wine seems mostly Pommard in character. 94.*



2013 Pennyroyal Farm Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., 678 cases, \$39. *Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark berry preserves, garrigue and earthy flora lead off. Full-bodied in style, with rich flavors of purple and black fruits with touches of anise, spice and herbs. The tannic backbone is well matched to the sappy fruit and there is a pleasing infusion of black raspberry jam on the finish. My only nit is that the wine lacks a bit of vibrancy. 89.*

2014 Roederer Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., \$N/A. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. The nose is heavily infused with barrel notes of smoke and toasty brioche with subtle aromas of black cherry in the background. Better on the palate, with a mid weight core of black cherry, dark raspberry, spice and smoke flavors with welcome intensity through the mid palate and the slightly creamy finish that leaves a slight amount of alcoholic warmth behind. This wine has the most oak overlay of any wine in this tasting. Roederer Estate's sparkling wines are at the pinnacle of California's offerings, but the winery just doesn't seem to have its heart in the production of this wine. 87.*

2013 Roma's Vineyard Ridge Top Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 115 cases, \$49. Dry farmed vineyard at 1,850 feet overlooking Boonville. Goldridge loam soils. Pommard clone. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels. Unfiltered. *Light cherry red color in the glass. Nicely composed aromatic profile featuring cherry, cranberry, rose petal and wooded path. Light to mid weight in style, and powerfully flavored with a lovely blend of cherry and spice, this wine is elegantly fashioned, nicely balanced, clean and long in the mouth. This beauty sneaks up rather than overwhelms. 92.*



2012 Roma's Vineyard Ridge Top Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 125 cases, \$49. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels and bottled unfiltered. *Light cherry red color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black cherry, baking spices, wilted rose and sandalwood. Lighter styled, with flavors of well-spiced dark cherry carrying through a juicy finish where aggressive tannins rise up to leave an astringent impression. 89.*

2013 The Withers Charles Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 300 cases, \$44. *Moderate reddish purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of cherry and cranberry are infused with oak that is more apparent over time in the glass. The mid weight plus charge of black cherry fruit is backed by chalky tannins and juicy acidity. Only a subtle bit of nutty oak is evident on the palate. The wine lingers at the finish with a fusion of citrus and boysenberry highlights. 90.*



2012 Toulouse Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 150 cases, \$55. A DRC selection and Wädenswil clone blend. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. A captivating wine from the get-go, with high flying scents of black cherry, spice and potpourri. Delicious middleweight flavors of black cherry, raspberry and dark chocolate. Impeccably balanced with gentle oak seasoning and a seductively silky mouthfeel. This special vineyard always seems to deliver. 94.*



2014 Twomey Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$50. *Medium reddish purple color in the glass. Uplifting aromas of black raspberry, black cherry, cinnamon toast, peppercorn and herb field. A vibrant mid weight wine on the palate offering flavors of blueberry-pomegranate and spice with cozy oak folded in. Riveting acidity in the background and on the finish makes for delightful drinking. 92.*

2013 Waits-Mast Deer Meadows Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 120 cases, \$58. *Moderately light reddish purple hue in the glass. Leading off are aromas of briery berries, cherry, and seasoned oak. This wine is cherry driven in a sleek, mid weight style, with a prominent woody, earthy tone. 88.*

2013 Witching Stick Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$49. *Moderately light reddish purple color in the glass. Haunting aromas of cherry, clove and rose petal lead to a core of cherry and pomegranate fruits. Soft, sleek and balanced on the palate with a bright acid backbone and integrated tannins, finishing lithe and persistent. Very seductive juice. 93.*



Up Close Look at Maggy Hawk

As regular readers know, I am a big fan of the Maggy Hawk Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs crafted by Elizabeth Grant-Douglas. She found time to give me a tour of the picturesque vineyard on a rainy Saturday morning before the Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival held at Goldeneye Winery in Philo. Elizabeth calls this vineyard her “favorite place on earth” so I was eager to see it.

Elizabeth traversed the muddy, bumpy and slippery slopes in the vineyard with expertise as I gazed about in wondrous amazement at the peaceful beauty of the vineyard. I have seen thousands of vineyards in my wine writing career, but there are very few that illicit such a response from me. Elizabeth’s single catchword for the vineyard, “Heavenly,” is the most apropos description.

The photo below does not do it justice, as the rain made it challenging to photograph.

This 58.7-acre property is hidden away a short distance west of the Rock Shop on Highway 128 in the deepest end of the Anderson Valley, this consists of multiple vineyards with varying aspects and slopes surrounded by densely wooded coastal redwoods. Fog-cloaked and wind-swept, the vines struggle throughout the growing season, ripening very slowly with yields typical less than two tons per acre.

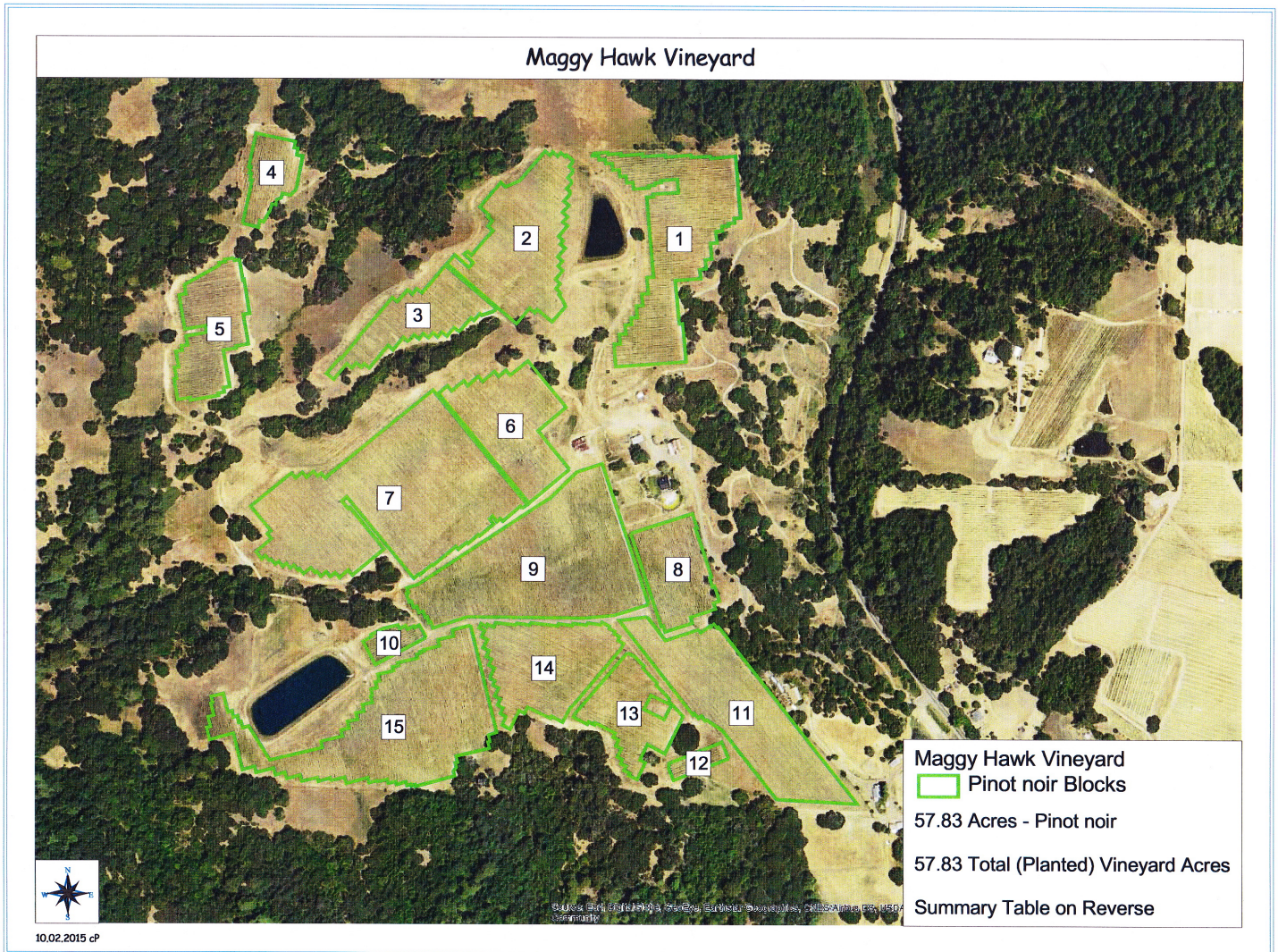


The Maggy Hawk Vineyard, named after owner Barbara Banke’s favorite thoroughbred horse, was planted in 2000 to 23.55 acres of varying distinct blocks and a variety of clones including Pommard 5, Wädenswil 2A, and Dijon 115, 667 and 777. The wines under the Maggy Hawk label first appeared in 2007 (before that, the grapes were a component of the La Crema Anderson Valley bottling beginning in 2003).

After tasting the first vintage I said, “The Maggy Hawk Pinot Noirs are vinous treasures of uncommon pedigree much like their namesakes. They are truly special connoisseurs’ wines that possess a somewhere-ness that sets them apart.” My opinion has not changed, having sampled wines from all seven vintages released to date.

Of the 27 Maggy Hawk Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs reviewed to date, nine have been given the Pinot Geek designation with scores of 94 or above. Every wine has received at least a score of 90. Now that I have visited the vineyard, the wines will become even more vivid in my mind.

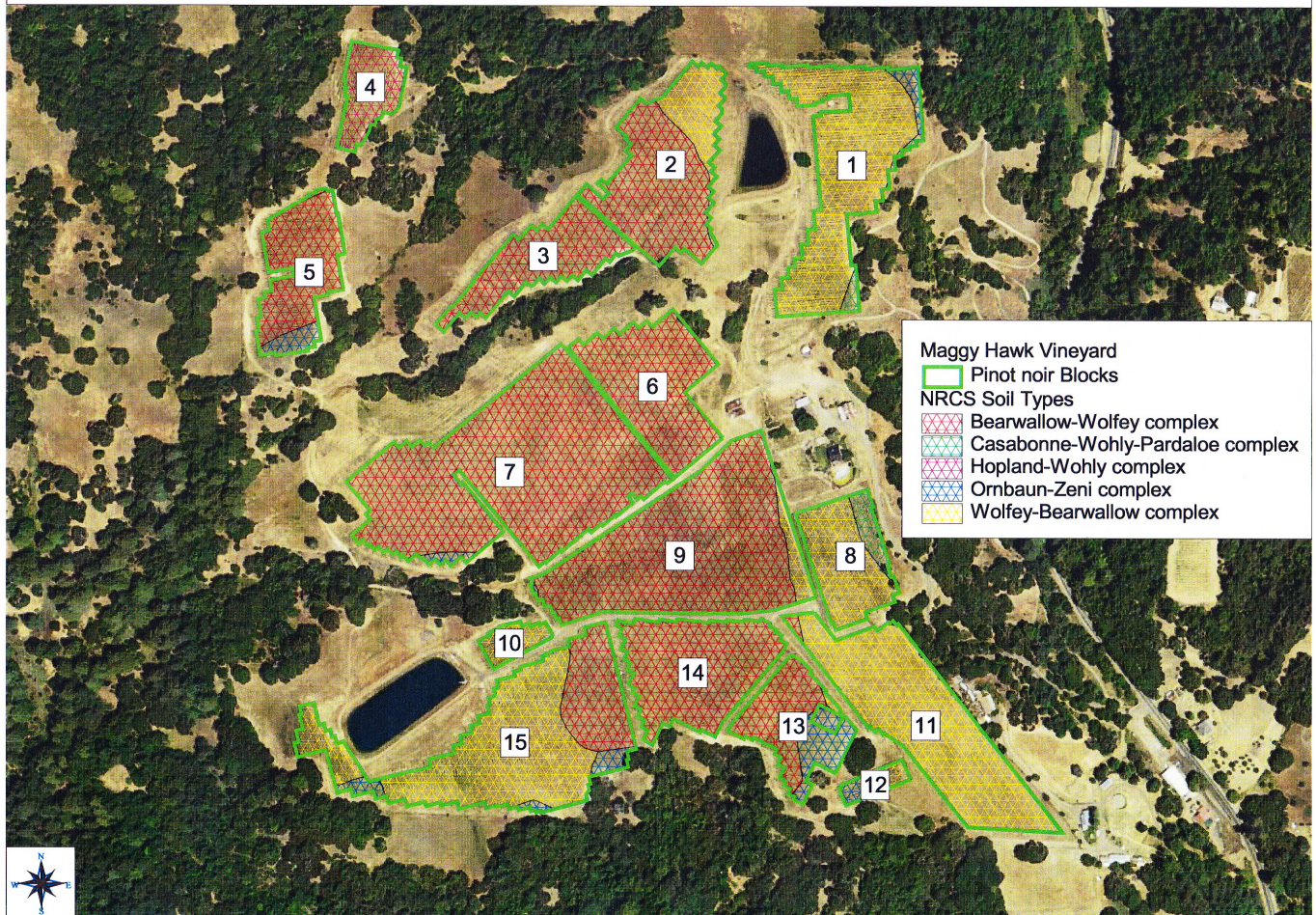
The Maggy Hawk wines are made from single clones from a specific block within the vineyard and each bottling is named after a horse born to the mare Maggy Hawk: Jolie, Afleet, Stormin', Unforegttable and Hawkster.



Maggy Hawk Vineyard

Former Name	Appellation	Manager	Vineyard	Block	Sub Block	Planted	Grafted	Variety	Clone	Start	Rows	Rootstock	Planted Acres	GPS Acres	Row Direction	Spacing	Trellis	Updated
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84001	01	2000		PN	777	NW	1-94	3309C	5.16	5.11	86°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84002	02	2000		PN	777	NE	1-71	3309C	4.30	4.27	131°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84003	03	2000		PN	5	NE	72-142	101-14	2.20	2.24	131°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84004	04	2000		PN	5	NE	1-24	101-14	1.21	1.22	12°	8 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84005	05	2000		PN	667	NE	1-59	3309C	2.54	2.54	81°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84006	06	2000		PN	667	NE	1-40	3309C	3.38	3.32	140°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84007	07	2000		PN	115	NE	41-146	101-14	9.93	9.86	140°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84008	08	2000		PN	115	NW	1-33	101-14	2.29	2.25	162°	8 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84009	09	2000		PN	115	NE	1-113	3309C	7.57	7.61	162°	8 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84010	10	2000		PN	115	SE	1-15	3309C	0.51	0.48	62°	8 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84011	11	2000		PN	777	NW	1-38	3309C	5.52	5.32	142°	8 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84012	12	2000		PN	2A	NE	1-9	3309C	0.42	0.37	68°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84013	13	2000		PN	2A	NE	1-49	3309C	2.19	2.16	116°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84014	14	2000		PN	2A	NE	1-61	3309C	3.52	3.52	116°	9 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
Philo / Falk	Anderson Valley	S. Kajiwara	Maggy Hawk	84015	15	2000		PN	777	NE	1-139	3309C	7.09	7.11	166°	8 X 5	VSP-BLC	10.02.2015
													57.83					

Maggy Hawk Vineyard



Last night (July 5, 2016) I popped the cork on the 2012 Maggy Hawk Hawkster which is made from a single 6.18-acre Wädenswil 2A planting (Block 13). The wine was aged 16 months in 100% French oak barrels, 63% new. I first reviewed the wine when it was young (score 93), then again in November 2015 wine I remarked, "A wine that brings emotion," score 97. The wine is exquisite now with glorious dark fruit, refined tannins and a finish that is both explosive and persistent. It is drinking now at or close to its apogee, score 97. Hawkster is only produced in the best vintages and is considered the crown jewel of the Maggy Hawk collection.

Maggy Hawk wines are sold through a mailing list at www.maggyhawk.com. I can highly recommend you saddle up.



The 19th Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival Grand Tasting

This event is a wonderful opportunity to meet the reclusive Anderson Valley winery owners and winemakers up close and personal. Held under the big tent at Goldeneye Winery in Philo, this year's tasting was threatened by rain, but the skies cleared through most of the afternoon and the cool weather made a perfect opportunity to indulge in great Pinot Noir. 56 wineries were pouring current releases, library wines and barrel samples of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir, and unlike many similar walk-around tastings, the crowd was mellow and not so overwhelming as to prevent easy access to each winery's booth.

One feature of the Anderson Valley Grand Tasting that sets it apart is the annual unique artwork of Gerald Reis of Design Studio in Cloverdale that commemorates each festival. His festival poster artwork from this and past year's events is available for purchase at www.reisdesign.com.



There were a few Pinots that stood out at the Grand Tasting: 2014 Drew Family Cellars Fog Eater, 2014 Drew Family Cellars Balo Vineyard, 2011, 2012 and 2012 Elke Vineyards Donnelly Creek Vineyard, 2014 Lazy Creek Vineyards Estate, and 2013 Twomey Cellars Monument Vineyard and 2014 Twomey Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. New faces that show tremendous promise included Ardzrooni Family Wines, Jaxon Keys Winery, Pangloss Cellars, Pennyroyal Farm, Quince Winery and Roma's Vineyard.

Upcoming Anderson Valley Winegrowers events:

4th Annual Barrel Tasting Weekend, July 23-24, 2016

12th International Alsace Varietals Festival, February 25-26, 2017
20th Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival, May 19-21, 2017.

Stay connected by visiting www.avwines.com.

Pinot Briefs

Oregon Wine Experience Multiple events from August 6 to August 28 make up the Oregon Wine Experience in Jacksonville, Oregon. Profits directly benefit the Children's Miracle Network and other Asante healthcare programs. Last year the event raised \$507,000.



{join *the* party}

oregon wine competition®
august 6 & 7

oregon wine university classes
august 6 to 25

medal celebration
august 24

ultimate vintner dinners
august 25 & 26

barrel auction
august 26

grand tasting
august 28

miracle auction & salmon bake
august 27

For tickets and sponsorship opportunities visit:
theoregonwineexperience.com

The graphic features a central silhouette of a wine bottle filled with various wine-related icons such as glasses, grapes, and vineyard elements. The text is arranged around this central image, with event details on the left and right sides.

Carlton Crush Harvest Festival Upper Park and Downtown Carlton, Oregon, will be the site for the annual Carlton Crush Harvest Festival on Saturday, September 10, 2016. No entrance fees and free parking. Visit www.carltoncrush.com for a full listing of activities for all ages that include pouring of fine wines and craft beers, live music, artists' marketplace, many food choices, and grape stomp competition.

Top California Pinot Noir Counties According to USDA-NASS statistics, California's top Pinot Noir producing counties are: Sonoma County 12,281 acres, Monterey County 9,438 acres, Santa Barbara County 5,223 acres, San Luis Obispo County 2,097, Napa County 2,695 acres, Mendocino County 2,695 acres, and the Central Valley (several counties) 14,687 acres. Average price per ton varies from a high of \$3,530 in Sonoma County to \$443-\$710 in the Central Valley.

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend The chefs serve, the winemakers pour and everyone delights in this event that contributes to local children's charities. The event will be held Labor Day weekend, September 2-4, 2016, throughout Sonoma County. Winemaker lunches, barbecues and dinners, Sonoma Starlight at Francis Ford Coppola Winery in Geyserville (September 2), Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Estate Vineyards in Healdsburg (September 3), and the Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction at Chateau St. Jean in Kenwood (September 4). Honorary Event Chair is Dan Kosta of Kosta Browne Winery and Culinary Chairs are Mark and Terri Stark of Stark Reality Restaurants. The event is a partnership between Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance and Sonoma County Vintners. Visit www.sonomawinecountryweekend for tickets.

Rollin Soles New Sparkling Wine Project Winemaker Rollin Soles is well known in Oregon for his sparkling wines produced at Argyle over the past 30 years. He built the first sparkling wine facility in Oregon in 1987 at Argyle Winery. Soles left Argyle to concentrate on his own label, ROCO, but continues to be a consultant to the Argyle sparkling wine program. He also is a shareholder in Radiant Sparkling Wine Company,

a custom-crush sparkling wine company. Beginning with the release of his 2013 RMS (Rollin Michael Soles) Brut in the fall of 2016, Soles is back in the sparkling wine game. The 2013 RMS Brut is a blend of Pinot Noir (clone 828) and Chardonnay (clone 95) from several Willamette Valley AVA that is produced at Rollin's ROCO Winery, and is priced at \$65. Of the 580 case production, 200 cases were disgorged in the spring 2016, and a second disgorgement will take place in summer 2016 for release nationally. 100 cases will be held back for disgorgement in 2023. The wine will be available at www.rocowinery.com.



Wine Spectator 2016 Restaurant Awards The latest August issue of the *Wine Spectator* features the winners of the 2016 Restaurant Awards that recognize outstanding wine programs. A total of 2,414 Award of Excellence, 1,093 Best Award of Excellence and 88 Grand Award winners were announced, covering 50 states and 72 countries. Wine Spectator also launched to entities: the official free Restaurant Awards app and the Restaurants.WineSpectator.com website.



Matt Courtney Joins MacPhail as Consulting Winemaker James MacPhail has left his namesake winery, and Matt Courtney, winemaker at Arista where he will continue, and owner and winemaker of his own brand, Ferren Wines, will serve as consulting winemaker and lead the brand forward. Before joining Arista, Matt made wine at Marcassin for nearly 8 years, including participating in the making of the first ever Chardonnay in California to garner a perfect 100 point score from Robert Parker, Jr.. The 2014 vintage will be the last vintage that James was in full control. There will be no significant change in philosophy and approach,

although some changes in vineyard sources will occur. Hess Family Wine Estates began working with then owner James MacPhail in 2007 and later bought the brand from him in 2010. Tim Person (the CEO at Hess), and his spouse Sabrina (Donald Hess's stepdaughter) are taking MacPhail under their wing.



Inman Family Wines Launches Cinematic Website Owner and winemaker Kathleen Inman worked closely with Blue Circle Branding (led by Emmy-award winning Robert Lundahl and partner David Howard) to design the site that includes full-frame videos that tell the story of the seasons, making Inman Family Wines the first winery website to use full-frame video on the popular Vin65 winery CMS platform. The video can be viewed on page load and mobile devices. The musical score is by indie-rock group The Lower 48 from Portland. To experience the new website and learn more about the excellent wines of Inman Family Wines in the Russian River Valley, visit www.inmanfamilywines.com. I believe this is the future of winery websites.

Wine Spectator Refuses to List label ABV in Wine Reviews: Why? The editor at *Wine Spectator* says they do not include alcohol levels in their wine reviews for two reasons: first, the regulations allow for a wide tolerance, so the true ABV may be significantly different from that printed on the label resulting in misleading information to consumers. Second, alcohol is only one element in a wine's balance and by itself is not a good predictor of a wine's quality or character. Allow me to dispute both reasons. First, an extensive study published in the *Journal of Wine Economics*, "False Label Claims About High and Rising Alcohol Content of Wine," 2015, reported that on average the label claims understate the true alcohol content by about 0.39% alcohol for Old World wine (red or white) and about 0.45% for New World wine (red or white). For New World wine, this variance would amount to about 0.60% for a wine of 13.5% alcohol by volume (ABV) and 0.65% for a wine of 14.5% ABV. This would indicate that on average wines with labeled ABV of 13.5% are closer to 14.0% and wines with labeled 14.5% are closer to 15.0%. This variance is within permissible limits (1.0% for wines with more than 14.0% ABV and 1.5% for wines with 14.0% or less ABV). Despite this allowable error, the consumer (especially most of those who are wine knowledgeable readers of the *Wine Spectator*) understands that although a wine with labeled 14.5% ABV may truly be 15.1%, the alcohol level is significantly higher than another wine with a labeled 13.5% ABV which at the most, can be 14.0% ABV. The consumer looking to drink within the limits of moderation needs to know the ABV. A bottle of Pinot Noir with 15% ABV contains 15% more alcohol than a bottle of wine containing 12% ABV. Second, the label ABV, although only one aspect of a wine's balance, is a very good predictor of a wine's quality and character. Higher alcohol wines, say well above 14.5%, are more likely to be out of balance, less aromatic, less age worthy and hot on the finish. Lower alcohol wines are more often balanced, more aromatic, more vibrant, more age worthy, and usually absent of any alcoholic warmth. I have been a long time proponent of listing the ABV on wines I review in the *PinotFile* (either the label ABV, or when available, the more reliable ABV stated in the winery tech sheet), and I believe I was the first wine publication to implement the practice on a consistent basis. Unfortunately for the consumer, the ABV is often present on a wine label in very small print (only 0.5 mm font size is required) and in some cases in a poorly contrasting color, so that it is virtually unreadable without a magnifying glass and therefore often ignored. This is still another good reason to include a wine's labeled ABV in reviewed wines. Of course, one should also list the acidity (pH and TA) and residual sugar in wine reviews, like I do, but that's another story.

Freeman Vineyard & Winery Opens Cave Tasting Room Ken and Akiko Freeman, proprietors of Freeman Vineyard & Winery have opened their cave tasting room located at their winery just outside the town of Sebastopol. It took years for the Freemans to modify their cave to accommodate visitors and obtain the necessary county permits. The cave tasting experience will be the only one offered in West Sonoma County by a high end winery. Freeman Vineyard & Winery has a storied history. The original red barn on the apple farm property was transformed into a winery and here some of the early Williams & Selyem vintages and later Kosta Browne wines were produced before Freeman production filled the cave chambers. Tastings are available by appointment only, Monday through Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.. The tastings are \$30 per person, and should be scheduled well in advance. Visit www.freemanwinery.com/provenance/



Tricking *PinotFile* Software

Over the past two months, my webmaster (pictured above), has been updating the Django software that runs my website. Some of you may have found problems accessing parts of the website, or were surprised by strange fonts as well as unusual formats, and I sympathize with your frustration.

The software that runs a website is a lifeline that must constantly be updated and revised. The updates require the expertise of a person trained in the complex challenges involved and I am lucky to have someone who attacks the challenge with veracity. That said, it takes time and I request your patience. A great bottle of Pinot will often work wonders to allay your frustrations.

If you meet with a problem with the website, please email me at prince@princeofpinot.com and I will forward the glitch to my webmaster. In the meantime, thank you for your support.

I should also give a shout out to my son, Dane, who has worked tirelessly over the past 10 years to assist me. His invaluable computer expertise allows him to collaborate closely with my webmaster to keep the site up to date. Dane posts every issue once I compose them, a task that can take him upwards of four hours. If your wine travels take you to Sonoma, visit him at Scribe Winery where he works and relishes the wine country lifestyle.

As far as my webmaster, all joking aside, all due respects go out to Michael MacDonald, who works hard in obscurity to keep the website software updated and ongoing.