



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

2016 Pinot Noir All-Americans

"Pinot Noir is a shape shifter, able to succeed at all levels of ripeness while still offering a degree of elegance."

Matt Kettmann, *Wine Enthusiast*, February 2016

At the conclusion of each year, I name my favorite domestic Pinot Noirs for the year. It is the American way to name the best, but each year the task becomes more challenging because the number of exceptional Pinot Noirs from California and Oregon continues to increase. There are nearly 3,000 producers of Pinot Noir in California and Oregon, and almost every producer offers multiple releases in any one vintage, meaning there could easily be over 10,000 American Pinot Noirs released into the marketplace each year.

In choosing the All-American Pinot Noirs, I follow several dictums. These have been outlined each year in the past and I will not repeat them here. Please refer to www.princeofpinot.com/article/1754/ for this information. I score all the wines using the 100-point score system with scoring guidelines as follows: 94-99 Extraordinary, 90-93 Outstanding, 86-89 Very Good and 82-85 Good. Wines scoring less than 82 do not merit publication in the *PinotFile*. Pinot Noirs awarded the Value icon offer an exceptional price to quality ratio and generally this is a wine priced at or below \$36 that is also in the Very Good or above category.

The extraordinary wines have what wine writer Hugh Johnson calls "numinous," that is defined by *Webster* as "the higher emotions or the aesthetic sense." Truly extraordinary, spellbinding wines elicit emotion.

The 2016 All-Americans were judged independent of price, case production, vintage or wine region of origin. Most of the wines tasted in 2016 were from the 2012, 2013 and 2014 vintages. It is somewhat unfair to compare wines from disparate vintages, but the evaluation of each wine is taken on its own merit in the context of the vintage.

Only finished bottled wines that are formally reviewed in controlled, and therefore comparable circumstances are candidates for All-American consideration. Almost all wines are culled from unsolicited winery submissions with a few wines coming from my personal cellar of purchased wines.

I also review California and Oregon Chardonnay and the same dictums apply.

A final disclaimer states that I have no monetary arrangement with any winegrower or winery and I do not accept advertising on my website. I do not receive or demand compensation from wineries to review their wine or publish their reviews or label images.

To search for the complete review of each All-American wine, visit the Home Page at www.princeofpinot.com. Click on Wine Reviews, then Current Reviews, then click on the Winery.

The most important take-away from these All-American awards is expressed in the words that Jamie Goode eloquently offered in his new book, *I Taste Red*, a discourse that explores how we taste wine: "The notion of rating or judging wine reflects the fact that we come to wine from our own perspective. A rating cannot be a global, universal score that is a property of that wine. If you do decide to follow a critic, you need to choose one whose own narrative of wine is largely overlapping with yours; you need to adjust for differences and calibrate yourself to the critic."

2016 California Pinot Noir All-Americans



The majority of the California All-Americans came from the Sonoma Coast AVA. Expect to pay at least \$70 for many wines and upwards of \$125 for a few wines in this category. It is an absolute truth that there is no such thing as extraordinary cheap Pinot Noir. That said, price is no guarantee of quality.



- 2014 Domaine De La Côte La Côte St. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **98**
- 2014 Peter Michael "Le Caprice" Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **98**
- 2014 Gary Farrell Love in the Time of Calera Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **97**
- 2013 Soliste Extravagant Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **97**
- 2012 Wayfarer Mother Rock Wayfarer Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **97**
- 2014 Windy Oaks Estate Old Vine Chalone Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir **97**
- 2013 Big Basin Vineyards Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir **96**
- 2014 Etude Grace Benoist Ranch Carneros Pinot Noir **96**
- 2013 Hartford Court Arrendell Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **96**
- 2014 Hibou Riddle Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **96**

2014 Patz & Hall Hyde Vineyard Napa Carneros Pinot Noir **96**
 2014 Small Vines TBH Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **96**
 2015 Sojourn Cellars Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **96**
 2013 Soliste L'Ambroisie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **96**
 2013 Windy Oaks Estate Les Deux Grands Cru Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir **96**
 2013 CIRQ Bootlegger's Hill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **95**
 2013 COBB Diane Cobb: Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2013 Donum East Slope Single Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir **95**
 2014 Dutton-Goldfield Deviate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2014 Etude Ellenbach Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2014 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2013 Maggy Hawk Jolie Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **95**
 2014 Sojourn Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2013 Soliste Renaissance Son Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2012 Soliste Foret Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **95**
 2013 Sonnet Muns Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir **95**
 2014 Balletto 18 Barrel Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2012 Big Basin Vineyards Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Boheme Stuller Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Briceland Vineyards Alderpoint Vineyard Humboldt County Pinot Noir **94** (Also Value-Priced All-American, \$33)
 2013 Cattleya Wines Cuvée Number One Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 COBB Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Couloir John Sebastiano Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Couloir Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2012 Dehlinger Goldridge Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Donum West Slope Single Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Dutton Goldfield Fox Den Vineyard Green Valley of RRV Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 En Garde Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Etude Fiddlestix Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Furthermore Nevina's Vineyard Sonoma Coast **94**
 2013 Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Gary Farrell Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Eric Kent Sascha Marie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Foursight Charles Vineyard Clone 05 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Hartford Court Hailey's Block Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Keller Estate Precioso Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2012 Ken Brown Radian Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Littorai Platt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 MacRostie Goldrock Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
 2013 Maggy Hawk Hawkster Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Morgan Tondre Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir **94**
 2014 Nelson Hill Deep End Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **94**

2014 Occidental Bodega Headlands Cuvée Elizabeth Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Paul Hobbs Ulises Valdez Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Paul Lato “Lancelot” Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir **94**
2014 RAEN Fort Ross-Seaview Home Field Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Sea Smoke “Ten” Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Siduri Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Small Vines MK Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Sojourn Riddle Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Sojourn Ridgetop Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Sojourn Rodgers Creek Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2015 Sojourn Sangiacomo Vineyard Son Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2013 Soliste L’Esperance Son Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Spell Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir **94**
2013 Talisman Aadastra Vineyard “Methode Valise” Los Carneros Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Three Sticks Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir **94**
2012 Toulouse Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir **94**
2013 Wren Hop Vineyards “Architects & Saboteurs” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **94**
2013 Windy Oaks Estate Estate Cuvée Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir **94**

2016 Oregon Pinot Noir All-Americans



Luminous Hills Vineyard December 2016

- 2012 Amalie Robert The Reserve Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir **97**
- 2013 Zena Crown Vineyard Slope Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **97**
- 2014 Cristom Marjorie Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **96**
- 2012 Airlie Vintner's Blend Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir **95** (Also Value-Priced All-American, \$35)
- 2012 Amalie Robert Estate Dijon Clones Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **95**
- 2012 Cristom Signature Cuvée Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **95**
- 2014 Cristom Louise Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **95**
- 2014 Stoller Family Estate Reserve Dundee Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **95**
- 2012 Amalie Robert Estate Amalie's Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **94**
- 2014 Big Table Farm Earth Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
- 2014 Broadley Vineyards Estate Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir **94**

2014 Cristom Eileen Vnyd Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **94**
2012 DION Vineyard Old Vines Chehalem Mountains Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2012 Domaine Drouhin Oregon Cuvée Laurene Dundee Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2012 Domaine Serene Fleur de Lis Vineyard Dundee Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2012 Domaine Serene Mark Bradford Vineyard Dundee Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2012 Domaine Serene Grace Vineyard Dundee Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Evesham Wood Cuvee J Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2014 LUMOS Temperance Hills Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Privé Joie de Vivre Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Sequitur Ribbon Ridge Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2014 Soléna Dom Danielle Laurent Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Oregon Pinot Noir **94**
2013 VIDON Vineyard Est Mirabelle Clone 115 Chehalem Mntns Oregon Pinot Noir **94**

Note: There are fewer Oregon All-Americans than California All-Americans in 2016 only because there are fewer wineries in Oregon and I reviewed less Oregon Pinot Noir as a result. The two rival states produce equally alluring Pinot Noir.

2016 California Value-Priced Pinot Noir All-Americans



My readers indicate to me that there is a large demand for reasonably priced (below \$40) Pinot Noir that also has a quality level that is in the Outstanding range. Here are 25 Pinot Noirs that I sampled in 2016 that fit into that category, all scoring 90 or above, ranging in price from \$15 to \$36. For large production wines that are widely available in retail wine stores and grocery stores, look to Carmel Road, La Crema and Migration California brands, and Adelsheim, Elk Cove and Ponzi Willamette Valley, Oregon, brands.

2014 Briceland Vineyards Alderpoint Vineyard Humboldt County Pinot Noir **\$33 94**

2014 Lichen Estate Moonglow Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **\$35 93**

2014 Manzoni Home Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir **\$35 93**

2014 Jacqueline Bahue Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **\$19.99 92** (NakedWines.com)

2014 Mignanelli KW Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir **\$32 92**

2014 Siduri Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **\$35 92**

2013 Brutocao Cellars Slow Lope'n Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **\$24 91**

2014 Donkey & Goat Helluva Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **\$34 91**

2014 On Point (Fulcrum) Christinna's Cuvée North Coast Pinot Noir **\$36 91**

2015 Vaughn Duffy Wines Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **\$36 91**

2014 Weatherborne Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir **\$35 91**

2014 Brach Mountain Wine Co. Cyprus Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **\$30 90**

2014 Carmel Road Monterey Pinot Noir **\$25 90**

2015 Cosa Obra Sonoma County Pinot Noir **\$28 90**

2014 Daryl Rex Groom D.R.G. Highmark Ridge Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
\$18.99 90 (NakedWines.com)

2014 Daryl Rex Groom D.R.G. River Road Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
\$18.99 90 (NakedWines.com)

2014 Elke Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir **\$36 90**

2013 Joseph Jewell Alderpoint Vineyard Humboldt County Pinot Noir **\$34 90**

2014 La Crema Monterey Pinot Noir **\$23 90**

2014 Mignanelli Highlands Ranch Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir **\$32 90**

2014 Migration Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **\$38 90**

2014 Nielson by Byron Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir **\$29 90**

2012 O'Connor Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **\$33 90**

2014 Ocean View San Luis Obispo Pinot Noir **\$14.99 90**

2014 Vaughn Duffy Wines Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **\$36 90**

2016 Oregon Value-Priced Pinot Noir All-Americans



- 2013 Boedecker Cellars Stewart Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$36 93**
- 2014 Seven of Hearts Armstrong Vineyard Ribbon Ridge Pinot Noir **\$35 93**
- 2014 Airlie Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$25 92**
- 2013 Evesham Wood Temperance Hill Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir **\$36 92**
- 2014 WildAire Timothy Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir **\$35 92**
- 2014 LUMOS Five Blocks Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$25 91**
- 2014 Seven of Hearts Bjornson Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir **\$35 91**
- 2012 Amalie Robert Estate iPinot Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$28 90**
- 2013 Boedecker Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$20 90**
- 2013 Evesham Wood La Grive Bleue Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir **\$28 90**
- 2014 Helioterra Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$30 90**
- 2014 La Crema Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$30 90**
- 2014 Luminous Hills Estate Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir **\$35 90**
- 2014 Maison Roy & Fils Petite Incline Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$35 90**
- 2014 Ponzi Vineyards Tavola Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$27 90**
- 2014 Willful Wine Co. Willamette Valley Oregon **\$26 90**
- 2014 Adelsheim Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$32 89**
- 2013 Alloro Estate Chehalem Mountains Pinot Noir **\$35 89**
- 2014 Anne Amie Vineyards Winemaker's Selection Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$25 89**
- 2014 Chehalem Three Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$32 89**
- 2014 Elk Cove Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$29 89**
- 2014 Illahe Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$19 89**
- 2015 Jezebel Oregon Pinot Noir **\$18 89**
- 2014 Siduri Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **\$27 89**

2016 California & Oregon Chardonnay All-Americans



2013 Cattleya Wines Pratt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **96**
2013 Dierberg Dierberg Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay **95**
2013 Keller Estate Precioso Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **95**
2014 Patz & Hall Hyde Vineyard Napa Carneros Chardonnay **95**
2014 Black Kite Cellars Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **94**
2014 Bucher Rio Oro Russian River Valley Chardonnay **94**
2014 Chappellet Napa Valley Chardonnay **94** (Also Value-Priced All American, \$35)
2015 Domaine Della Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay **94**
2013 Dunstan Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **94**
2014 E16 Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay **94**
2014 Frank Family Vineyards Lewis Vineyard Reserve Carneros Chardonnay **94**
2014 Gary Farrell Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay **94**
2014 Gary Farrell Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay **94**
2013 Hartford Court Seascape Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **94**
2014 la pitchoune Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **94**
2014 MacPhail Pratt Vineyard Vine Hill Road Russian River Valley Chardonnay **94**
2014 Ram's Gate Hudson Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay **94**
2014 FEL Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay **94**
2013 Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay **94**
2013 Stony Hill Napa Valley Chardonnay **94**

2013 Domaine Serene Recolté Grand Cru Dundee Hills Chardonnay **95**
2014 Walter Scott Cuvée Anne Willamette Valley Chardonnay **95**
2014 Big Table Farm The Elusive Queen Willamette Valley Chardonnay **94**
2014 Knudsen Vineyards Dundee Hills Chardonnay **94**
2014 Soléna Willamette Valley Pinot Noir **94** (Also a Value-Priced All-American, \$30)
2014 Walter Scott X Novo Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Chardonnay **94**

2016 California & Oregon Value-Priced Chardonnay



- 2015 Bucher Unoaked Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$30 93**
2015 Ernest Vineyards Edaphos Green Valley Ranch Chardonnay **\$28 93**
2014 Presqu'île Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay **\$35 90**
2015 Screen Door Cellars Asern Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$25 93**
2014 Anaba Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **\$36 92**
2014 Attune Sonoma County Chardonnay **\$36 92**
2013 Engracia Silva Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **\$30 92**
2014 Kita Hilliard Bruce Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay **\$30 92**
2014 Mignanelli Nelson Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mtns Chardonnay **\$28 92**
2015 Balletto Teresa's Unoaked Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$20 91**
2014 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Estate Chardonnay **\$25 91**
2014 Pellegrini Unoaked Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$22 91**
2013 Anaba Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$36 90**
2013 Anaba J McK Estate Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay **\$34 90**
2013 Byington Wrights Station Vineyard Santa Cruz Mtns Chardonnay **\$30 90**
2013 MacRostie Sonoma Coast Chardonnay **\$25 90**
2013 Presqu'île Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay **\$35 90**
2014 Sonoma-Loeb Sangiacomo Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay **\$27 90**
2014 FEL Anderson Valley Chardonnay **\$28 89**
2014 Frank Family Vineyards Carneros Chardonnay **\$35 89**
2014 J. Lohr October Night Arroyo Seco Chardonnay **\$25 89**
2014 MacRostie Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$32 89**
2013 Martin Ray Mill Station Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Chardonnay **\$35 89**
- 2015 Soléna Willamette Valley Chardonnay **\$30 94**
2012 Airlie Willamette Valley Chardonnay **\$18 92**
2014 Alloro Estate Chehalem Mountains Chardonnay **\$34 91**
2014 Stoller Family Estate Dundee Hills Chardonnay **\$30 91**
2014 Cameron Dundee Hills Chardonnay **\$19.50 89**

2014 Longplay "Jory Slope" Lia's Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Chardonnay **\$32 89**
2014 Eola Hills Oregon Chardonnay **\$18 88**

2016 Winery of Year: Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery

Blessed with a diverse palate of vineyards culled by Gary Farrell's years of personal relationships with legendary growers in the Russian River Valley dating back to the early 1980s, and embracing as well as embellishing the Gary Farrell house style, winemaker Theresa Heredia has guided Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery to the forefront of California's elite group of distinguished Pinot Noir and Chardonnay producers. She has so impressed me with her accomplishments over the last three vintages, that I chose the Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery my 2016 Winery of Year.

Gary Farrell was a pioneering winemaker whose eponymous label brought Russian River Valley Pinot Noir into prominence. After developing his winemaking skills during the mid-1970s working in the cellars of Tom Dehlinger, Robert Stemmler and Davis Bynum, he started his own label, Gary Farrell, in 1982, and the same year made the inaugural Pinot Noir for Rochioli Vineyard & Winery, trading winemaking for grapes from Rochioli West Block and Allen Vineyard for his own inaugural release.

Farrell's production under his own label had increased to 11,000 cases, outgrowing the facility at Davis Bynum Winery where he made his wines, and he partnered with financier Bill Hambrecht to build an architecturally stunning winery on Westside Road (pictured below).



In 2004, he sold his label and winery to Allied Domecq. The winery's management subsequently passed through corporate owners Beam Wine Estates and then Ascentia Wine Estates. Unhappy practicing his art under corporate ownership, Farrell left Gary Farrell Winery in 2006, and started a small artisan label, Alysian Wines. He chose Susan Reed, who had worked with him for four years, to succeed him as winemaker. On May 1, 2012, Theresa Heredia replaced Reed as winemaker, and the winery moved into a new era of success while still honoring the legacy of Gary Farrell who is now retired from winemaking.

Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery is currently owned by The Vincraft Group, a Sonoma-based wine company that also owns Kosta Browne Winery. Vincraft is not content with the status quo, and always strives to push Theresa and her staff to higher levels of quality. Production is gradually expanding to 30,000 cases (but not beyond) as new elite grape sources are acquired within the Russian River Valley.

Theresa Heredia was an accomplished winemaker when I made her acquaintance several years ago while she was part of a team of winemakers at Freestone Vineyards. The modern Freestone winery, owned by Joseph Phelps, had considerable resources, and allowed her the opportunity to experiment with a number of leading edge winemaking techniques. She responded by crafting some remarkable Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines that really caught my attention.



Theresa was raised in Pittsburg, California and attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo where she majored in chemistry. While apart of the chemistry doctorate program at University of California at Davis, she found that the ongoing research in enology and viticulture was more interesting than the research in the Chemistry Department, and she switched to the Enology & Viticulture program. In addition, she had developed an interest in wine both at Davis and during travels in the wine regions of Europe.

Her first job in the wine industry was as a harvest intern at Saintsbury in Carneros. She was then hired as an enologist at Phelps that eventually led to her winemaking position at Freestone Vineyards.

I asked Theresa about the challenges she faced when she first arrived at Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery. With a multitude of vineyard sources and many wines in the portfolio, it seemed to be a daunting task. She told me that luckily the assistant winemaker had been at the winery for eleven years and the enologist for several years so the staff was experienced in the winery operations. In addition, Nancy Bailey rejoined Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery as general manager, a position she had previously held in 2006-2007. When Theresa arrived in May 2012, the 2011 wines were in barrel and she was able to taste through the wines to familiarize herself with the many different vineyard sources. Her first vintage in charge from harvest to bottling was 2012.

Theresa initially found the wines to be clean and crisp, but shared many similarities and lacked some inspiration. The winemaking regimen tended to strip the wines of character. The wines were being sent to barrel immediately after primary fermentation, racked off the lees once, and pad filtered. The wines were all aged the same, in medium toast cooperage that was not tailored to individual wine sources.

Theresa instituted a number of Pinot Noir winemaking techniques for the better that were “feathered” into the process through subsequent vintages. These changes included (1) Acquisition of an additional vibrating sorting table, (2) Air conditioning in the barrel room to prevent evaporation leading to lower finished ABV, (3) Use of a basket press instead of a bladder press improving the quality of the press wine, (4) Native yeast fermentations, (5) Saignée to add depth, (6) Addition of a modest percentage (9%-22% in 2012) of whole cluster to contribute tannin, backbone and spice, (7) Employing some ferments in 5-ton oak tanks that allow warmer, natural ferments and gentler extraction, (8) Institution of extended maceration to enhance mouthfeel and alter aromatic esters and tannins (Theresa would say, “At the end of fermentation there is ‘grape juice’ but at the end of extended maceration there is ‘wine,’”) (9) No racking. Leaving the wine on the lees acts as a preservative and preserves the wine’s character, (10) Tailoring the cooperage and toast to specific vineyards, (11) Discontinued filtering of the wines, (12) Gradual use of an increased number of large oak puncheons (500 Liter) for Chardonnay that offer less oak surface area, and (13) Use of concrete eggs as an added tool in vinification of Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The single vineyard Pinot Noir wines are made only from 100% free-run juice. The wines are aged typically for 15 months (10 months in the case of the Russian River Valley Selection Pinot Noir) in 40%-50% new French oak barrels.

Chardonnays are fermented in French oak barrels (40% new) from several Burgundian cooperages, undergo full malolactic fermentation, and aged on their yeast lees, with weekly stirring during malolactic fermentation and monthly thereafter for seven months before bottling.

The result is that the Gary Farrell wines still retain food-friendly acidity that has been a hallmark of the Gary Farrell Style, but they have more extraction, more complexity and more textural interest. Theresa has infused the lineup of wines with a stylistic stamp that makes them distinctive as a whole, without sacrificing, and even embellishing, the vineyard identity of each singular wine.

A newer series of small lot unique wines introduced with the 2011 vintage reflect the “inspiration” of the winemaker and are bottled with black labels as the Inspiration Series. One of these wines, the 2014 Love in the Time of Calera Pinot Noir produced using Calera selections from Fort Ross and Martaella vineyards, was one of my top scoring All-Americans this year. Some of this wine was vinified with 50% whole cluster in an oak tank, and some was vinified with 30% whole cluster in stainless steel (70 cases, \$70, available to Wine Club members only).



An interactive Russian River Valley vineyard map showing many of the winery’s vineyard sources is offered on the winery website at www.garyfarrellwinery.com. The list of elite vineyards that supply grapes to Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery is extensive, with names like Rochioli River Block and Allen, Bacigalupi, Martinelli Lolita and Parnell Ranch, Martaella, Pellegrini Olivet Lane Estate, Stiling, Ritchie, Westside Farms, Lancel Creek, Hallberg, Dutton Ranch Wat, Tboni, Emeritus McDonald Mountain, and Pratt Cornerstone. Vineyards outside the Russian River Valley include Durell in Sonoma Valley, Fort Ross in Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast, Gap’s Crown in Sonoma Coast and Bien Nacido in Santa Maria Valley. There are very few producers of California Pinot Noir and Chardonnay that can lay claim to such an extensive array of top notch, older vine vineyard sources. Below is the map in a non interactive form.



I have reviewed nearly every Pinot Noir and Chardonnay that Theresa has crafted from the 2012, 2013 and 2014 vintages. She blended the 2011 vintage but did not vinify the wines that year. A summary of some of the scores I awarded will give you an idea of the high quality of the wines.

Gary Farrell Rochioli Vineyard RRV Pinot Noir: 2012 93, 2013 93, 2014 94-95

Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyards RRV Pinot Noir: 2012 90, 2013 94

Gary Farrell Toboni Vineyard RRV Pinot Noir: 2012 90, 2013 96, 2014 94

Gary Farrell Hallberg Vineyard RRV Pinot Noir: 2012 92, 2013 92, 2014 93

Gary Farrell Bien Nacido Vineyard SMV Pinot Noir: 2012 92, 2013 94, 2014 92

Gary Farrell Rochioli Vineyard RRV Chardonnay: 2012 90, 2013 93, 2014 94

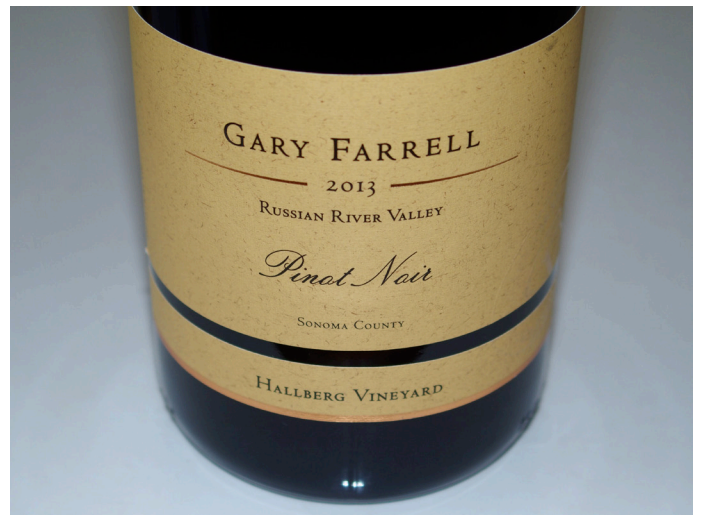
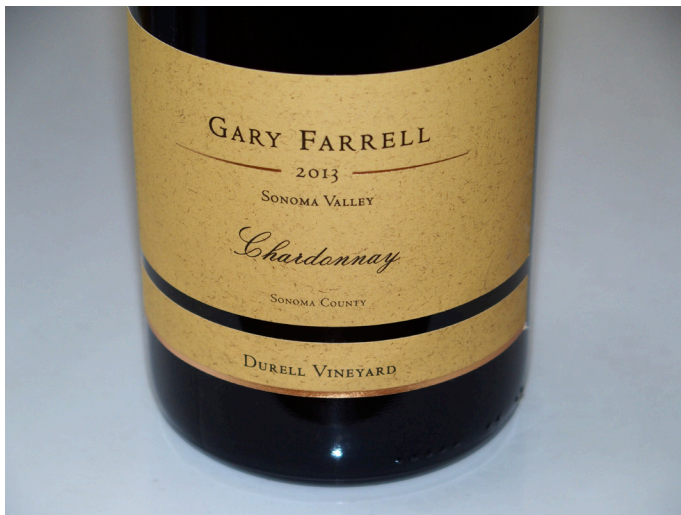
Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyards RRV Chardonnay: 2012 90, 2013 92 (Oak Puncheon 93), 2014 92

Gary Farrell Bacigalupi Vineyard RRV Chardonnay: 2012 91, 2013 90, 2014 94

Gary Farrell Durell Vineyard Sonoma Valley Chardonnay: 2012 89, 2013 92, 2014 91

Of the 60 Gary Farrell wines crafted by Theresa from the 2012, 2013 and 2014 vintages that I have reviewed, only 8 wines received less than a score of 90 and 6 of those scored 89. 11 wines received a score of 94 or above. This is a testament to consistent quality. You will also notice that the wines have improved in quality each year over the three vintage span that Theresa has been responsible for the wines. Reviews of Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery wines can be found at www.princeofpinot.com/winery/420/.

The tasting room and terrace at Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery is currently undergoing renovation to better accommodate guests. Guests are welcome in the meantime by appointment in new “glamping cottages” adjacent the winery. Reservations can be made online or by phoning 707-473-2909, or contacting concierge@garyfarrellwinery.com. Refer to the winery website for tasting options. Members of the Grand Crew Club have guaranteed access to small-lot wines, pre-release access to the entire Gary Farrell portfolio and special benefits when visiting the winery. Visit www.garyfarrellwinery.com for details.



Wines Not Reviewed but Highly Enjoyed in 2016

These are wines I drank on various occasions that made enough of an impression on me that I feel they are worth recognition.

1993 Williams Selyem Cohn Vineyard Sonoma County Pinot Noir

2007 Davis Family Vineyards Pinacole Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

2007 George Leras Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

**2007 Peirson-Meyer Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay
(Magnum)**

2009 Donum West Slope Carneros Pinot Noir

2009 Paul Lato Pisoni Vineyard "Lancelot" Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

**2009 Williams Selyem Williams Selyem Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
(Magnum)**

2009 Comte des Lafon Volnay Santenots Burgundy

2012 Benovia Cohn Vineyard Sonoma County Pinot Noir

2012 Soliste L'Ambroisie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2012 Alma Fria Doña Margarita Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2012 Maggy Hawk Hawkster Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

2012 Freeman Gloria Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (Magnum)

2013 Aubert Lauren Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

2013 George Buena Tierra Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (Magnum)

2014 Cattleya Pratt Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay

2014 Cattleya Cuvée Number One Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

Quotable Wine Quotes of 2016

Quotes have relevance in a historical context because they tell us about the topics and controversies that are prevalent at a certain year in time. They also represent a gift that says plenty with few words. Here are the most notable quotes related to Pinot Noir and wine generally that captured my attention in 2016.

Regarding Pinot Noir:

“When Pinot producers get it right, the wines have it all: gorgeous aromatics, silky texture, bright acidity and supple tannins. What’s not to like?”..... Natasha Hughes, MW

“Many young Pinot Noirs have suffered with judges who didn’t understand them. Simple, fruity Pinot Noirs with no cellar potential often end up with gold medals, when far better wines that are just too young get silvers or bronzes. Given a little time in the bottle, they become far better than those that got gold medals.”.....Attribution lost

“There’s still a long way to go with too many Pinot Noirs; too many of my notes said something along the lines of ‘red wine not Pinot Noir,’ ‘lacks varietal definition,’ ‘too little characteristic perfume’....Those that scored poorly need to get the heat and hulking body out of the wine, get perfume, typical fruit, elegance and silky smooth texture in. Pinot Noir is such an exciting cultivar, and is going great things in places such as Australia and New Zealand. The benchmark in the New World is so much higher than even just a decade ago.”.....Sally Easton, MW

“If an alien asked me: “What can Americans achieve? I’d sit him down with a glass of Eyrie Pinot and a copy of As I Lay Dying.”.....John Atkinson, MW

“Cabernet is big and boisterous and tannic. Pinot is complicated and sexy.”..... Anonymous winemaker

“Reduction was a problem (at Drinks Business Global Pinot Noir Masters tasting): I guess that winemakers, in their quest to preserve the fragile fruit aromas of Pinot Noir, are avoiding any oxidation, but have gone too far to the other extreme. As a result, so many of the wines were flat, tarry, rubbery and smoky on the nose; no oxidation but no Pinot Noir charm either.”.....Jonathan Pedley, MW

“Pinot is like the little girl who had a curl: when it is good, it is very, very good; when it is bad, it is horrid.”.....One of judges at Drinks Business Global Pinot Noir Masters tasting

“Pinot Noir is very hard to get right, particularly at the cheaper end of the price scale.”.....Jonathan Pedley, MW

“A great Pinot chases its own tail.”.....Actor Kurt Russell

“I think if you asked most people what’s the next best place outside of Burgundy that makes Pinot Noir, hopefully, it’s the Willamette Valley.”.....Steve Doerner, winemaker Cristom Vineyards

“I think I’m simply too much of a Burgundian at heart to be able to appreciate fully whether Pinot Noir in other guises can be considered to achieve greatness.”.....Benjamin Lewin, MW

“I’m Doon with Noir.”.....Randall Grahm, winemaker

“There’s a magic in Pinot Noir, it’s a lifelong pursuit. While Cabernet is in front of grand homes, Pinot Noir is in peasant plots. Pinot Noir is of the earth. There’s that part of Pinot Noir that is decay. There’s a sort of fleetingness about it, there’s a purity. It’s refreshing. It’s without clutter.”.....Richard Sanford, Alma Rosa Winery

Regarding winemaking:

“At one extreme, winemakers are producing wines that are so sweet, alcoholic and oaky, that they lose their identity; sometimes it is even a struggle to identify which grape they are made from. At the other extreme, what I will appropriately call the Cult of Cold Climate in CA (CCCC) is both the antithesis and the consequence of the state’s fashion for excess in wine. Although the wines try to smell vaguely French, the mouthful is often weak and weedy, a consequence of picking too early and from fashionably cold sites....the siblings of Eurocentric and anti-New World snobbery. Under ripe is simply the new overripe, dressed up in today’s fashions.”.....Dominic Fenton

“Just as you can lose terroir from picking too late, you can lose it by picking too early.”.....Sasha Moorman, winemaker

“One of my personal pet peeves about oak in American winemaking is the confusticated heavy-handedness of it all. Too many wines rely on an superabundance of oak to cover a world of shortcomings without regard to any boundary between making wine and making oak tea. In my mind, if the first impression the consumer gets from your wine is the smell of oak, then you have failed as a winemaker.”.....Curtis Phillips, winemaker

“High alcohol level is an indicator of late picking and while it is possible to have a high alcohol red that still has fruit freshness, it usually means that the wine will have a sweet, jammy, dead fruit flavor.”.....Jamie Goode, wine writer

“Wine frequently tastes like the winemaker in somewhat the same way that dogs tend to resemble their owners.”.....Nick Wise, Linda Sunshine

“Making wine teaches you to be humble. You realize that you are not in control. You can’t compete with Mother Nature. It is best to collaborate.”.....Jake Lorenzo, winemaker

“There is no difference in quality due to differences in yield provided that the grapes reach the same level of maturity.”.....Mark Matthews, *Terroir & Other Myths of Winegrowing*

Regarding Wine Generally:

“The lightness and fineness of a Zalto’s form requires your attention when you pick it up, but the moment you put the glass to your lips, it seems to disappear. Suddenly there’s nothing between you and the wine. It’s the difference between listening to an MP3 and a 78-rpm record; the song is the same but the experience is richer, finer....amplified. When the wine is perfect, the experience is sublime.”.....Maggie Harrison, winemaker Antica Terra

“The brutal fact of the matter is that very few wine enthusiasts - and arguably, still fewer professional critics - have anything more than the sketchiest understanding of the connection between land and wine.”.....David Williams

“No two bottles of wine sealed with corks will perform identically over time, the difference is infinitesimal at first, progressively becoming more evident over time.”.....James Halliday

“There are 5 simple words that can be used indiscriminately and interchangeably such that no wine snob will ever look at you sideways. They are complex, balanced, layered, intense and well-rounded.”.....Don Dunn

“Clones, like prison inmates and race cars, have numbers instead of names.”.....Dan Dunn

“I would rather fall in love with a wine than find fault with it.”.....Dan McInerney

“In the last 20 years, wine collecting has become a rarified sport, fraught with testosterone-fueled auctions and scandalizing fraud.”.....Jon Bonné

“Wine journalism is an oxymoron, like ‘natural wine’ or ‘President Trump.’”.....Tim Atkin, MW

“If there is anything that can save objectivity in wine perception, it is that wine appreciation is largely learned rather than innate.”.....Jamie Goode, *The Taste of Red*

“I’ve always been of the mind that wine needs to get over itself. I’m a huge fan, but as much as I love it, I often feel that the wine industry is its own worst enemy.”.....Sang Yoon, chef

“We are living in a fake time. The wines are boring, taste all the same, don’t age, and have lost the drinkability factor. It has become an industry.”.....Dirk Niepoort, Douro winemaker

“People want to drink wine and enjoy wine, but only a small percentage want to read about it.”.....Alder Yarrow, *Vinography*

“Wine is not ‘better’ because it is made according to some philosophy but rather because it tastes better. And taste does not belong to one philosophy, to one style, to one set of insiders. In its reliance on its own self-righteousness, *In Pursuit of Balance (IPOB)* became its own outsider. Its passing is well-deserved because IPOB lost sight of the real reason people drink wine. They find it enjoyable because it tastes good. I do not mourn its passing even as I salute the good that it has done. In that, IPOB will manage to outpoint Caesar.”.....Charles Olken, *Connoisseurs’ Guide to California Wine*

“While some influential critics still seem to favor wines of concentration, power and ripe fruit flavors, the next generation of sommeliers, writers, and influencers fortunately gravitate toward wines of place rather than wines of style. Ripeness remains the most important discussion in the world of wine.”.....Jamie Goode

Regarding Somms:

“The thing that makes the sommeliers the most dangerous of the booze hipsters is their secret weapon, a twin instrument designed to destroy both your self esteem and your wallet: the wine list.”.....Dan Dunn

“Wine pairings are a great way to get ripped off.”.....Jill Zimorski, Alinea Group wine director

“More than anything, when I go to a restaurant, I want to be able to choose my own wine, even if the sommelier thinks he or she knows best what I should drink. That doesn’t mean I’m not open to suggestions. But I want the final choice to be, if not mine, at least a joint decision.”.....Lettie Teague

“Pinot Noir is a somm’s playground. If it’s heavy steak marbleization on the table, I’m going to look for a Pinot on my list that has structure and concentration. If it’s more lean, like a filet, I will go for a prettier expression of Pinot.”.....Jaimee Anderson, beverage director Wolfgang Puck steakhouse CUT

“Pleasure is not proportional to the price of wine.” Mark Oldman, sommelier

Pinot Briefs

Panelists Announced for 2017 IPNC Moderator Eric Asimov of *The New York Times* will be joined for the Grand Seminar, “The French Adventurers: Burgundians Making Pinot Noir in Oregon,” by panelists Véronique Boss-Drouhin (Domaine Drouhin Oregon), Dominique Lafon (Lingua Franca), Jackques Lardière (Resonance), Jean-Nicolas Méo (Domaine Nicolas-Hay) and Alexandrine Roy (Phelps Creek Vineyards). The Early Bird Ticket special (\$100 off registration fee) expires December 31, 2016. Register now at www.ipnc.org.

Charlie Palmer’s Pigs & Pinot The 12th Annual Pigs & Pinot Weekend will be held Friday, March 17 and Saturday, March 18, 2017. Held at the Hotel Healdsburg, this celebration has become a tradition among pork and Pinot Noir enthusiasts who have the opportunity to experience the creations of over 60 winemakers and 20 chefs. Featured winemakers are Aubert Lefas (Domaine Lejeune), Michael Browne (Kosta Browne, CIRQ), Daniel J. O’Connell (O’Connell Vineyards), Lynn Penner-Ash (Penner-Ash Wine Cellars) and Ben Cane (Westwood Estate). Exclusive Alaska Airlines VISA Signature Pre-Sale is Wednesday, January 11, 2017, with the General Sale starting on Thursday, January 12, 2017, at 11:00 a.m. PST. Both hotel packages and individual event tickets are available. This event sells out within a day or sooner. Visit www.pigsandpinot.com.

World of Pinot Noir The annual World of Pinot Noir will be held March 3-4, 2017, at the Bacara Resort & Spa in Santa Barbara, California. The event includes two days of in-depth tasting seminars, Grand Tastings, a Burgundy seminar and special lunches and dinners. For a list of participating wineries and participating chefs, as well as to register, visit www.worldofpinotnoir.com.

Wine Sales at Peak Wine sales peak in the week leading up to Christmas. Sales are on average 57% higher than any other week of the year. (Nielsen data)

Tasting Blind or Blindly Tasting? I do not taste wines blind for multiple reasons that I have elucidated in the past. First, I frequently have production tech notes on each wine available, and that assists me further in understanding the winemaking and the wine. The more background detail I have, the more I am likely to discover in the wine. Second, I prefer to evaluate wines in the same manner as the consumer experiences them. Third, I believe an essential part of judging wine is to know what you are drinking. Fourth, it is very difficult to judge typicality in blind tasting. A wine must be varietally correct to warrant a high score. Varietal labels offer expectations for both the wine reviewer and the consumer. Fifth, reviews of music, plays, restaurants, cars, etc., are never done blind, so why wine? It make sense that the major wine publications taste blind because they accept advertising and this can create conflict of interest.

Pinot Noir Challenging Cabernet in Popularity Wine-Searcher reports that Cabernet Sauvignon had more searches, around 9 million, so far this year, considerably more than any other varietal. The main competition is Pinot Noir. Non-Burgundy Pinot Noir had 3.3 million searches in 2016, with an upward trend over the last half of the year. Visit www.wine-searcher.com/m/2016/12pinot-noir-s-cabernet-challenge.

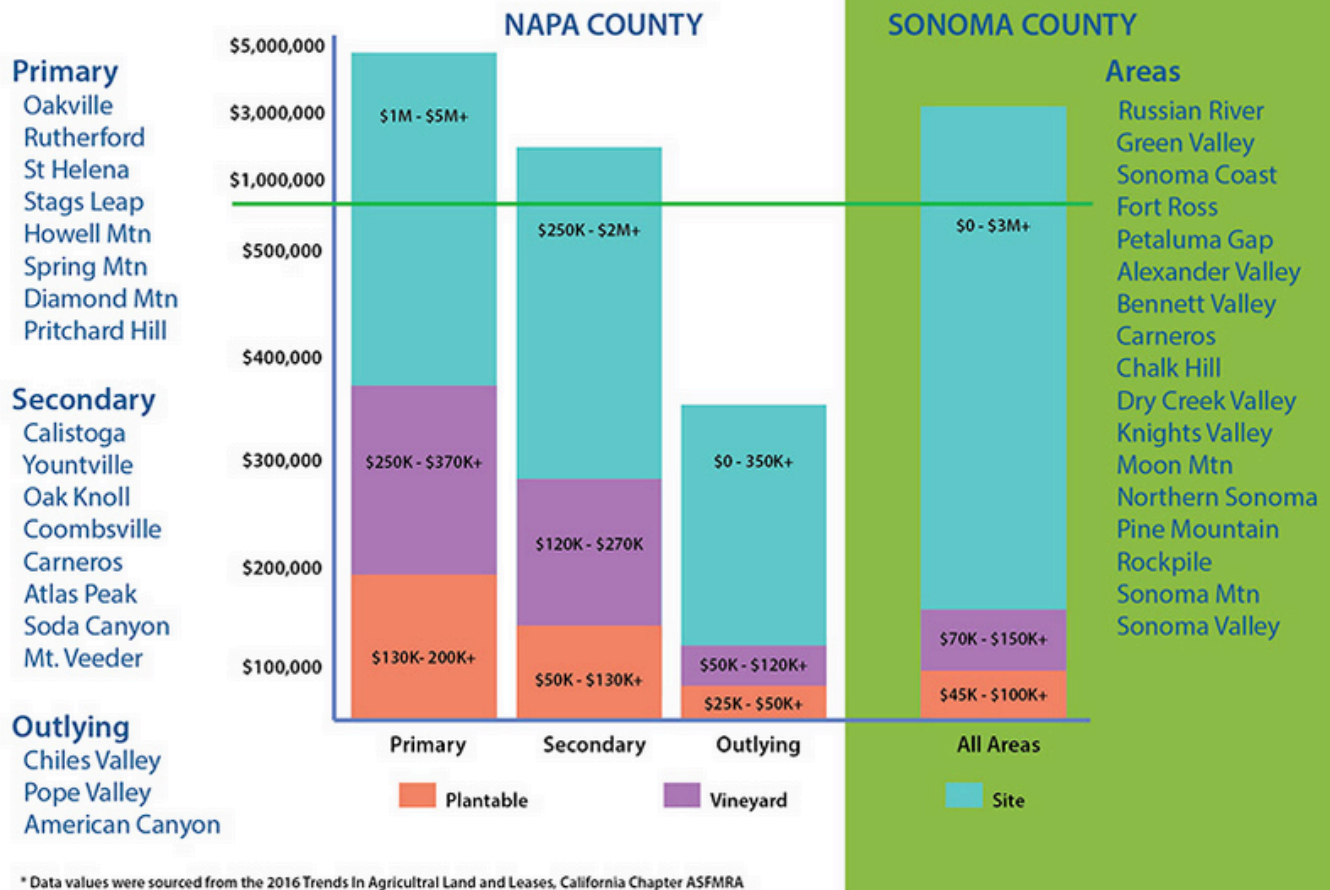
Wine Storage Cooler Advice If you are planning to buy a wine storage cooler, pay special attention to the storage capacity of the unit for larger bottles if you buy Pinot Noir. Standard Bordeaux and California Cabernet bottles are 2³/₄" wide at the base, while typical California Pinot Noir bottles are 3¹/₈" wide at the base. Unless stated otherwise, the capacity of the unit you are buying will be lower, even up to 40% lower, than what

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2016 Vineyard & Plantable Land \$ Per Acre

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* Data values were sourced from the 2016 Trends In Agricultural Land and Leases, California Chapter ASFMRA

Napa and Sonoma Vineyard Real Estate Value Chart - vineyardandwinerysales.com

Source: [Vintroux](#)



Recent photo of a snowman pinotphile courtesy of Kim Swicker of Airlie Winery in Oregon's Willamette Valley

The harvest was perfect, the crush was A-1
Total production was up by a ton
The Pinot was all bundled
Up snug in French oak
Fermentation awakened amid memories of cold soak
Who will now buy it?
How will it be priced?
Will Parker anoint it?
Will the Prince be enticed?
Wait until morning
You've earned a respite
A cool glass of Pinot
And to all, a Good Night!

To all vintners and lovers of Pinot Noir, I wish you the best of Holidays