



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

Piloting Pinot (& Other Wines)

Traveling for years along the Pinot Trail, I have noticed there is predilection for pilots and in particular commercial airline pilots to take on a second career in the wine business as winery or vineyard owners and often winemakers. My research has uncovered over 30 domestic wineries in which pilots are involved as winery owners, winegrowers or winemakers, and in a number of instances focused on Pinot Noir.

The pilot and wine connection has deep roots going back to Joseph Swan fifty years ago. Swan was a pilot for Western Airlines when, at the age of 45 years, bought a rundown Zinfandel vineyard, barn and house on Laguna Road in the Russian River Valley. The area was a few miles from Westside Road and the Middle Reach sub region of the Russian River Valley, but the climate was cooler and foggier. Andre Tchelistcheff suggested to Swan that he plant Pinot Noir in the area. In 1968, he retired from his pilot job, and after harvesting the planted Zinfandel that year, began a replanting of the 10-acre vineyard to Pinot Noir (Mount Eden budwood), Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.



Swan's Trenton Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir prospered and subsequent cuttings, termed Swan selections or incorrectly the Swan clone, were used by numerous vineyards in California and continue to be planted in various domestic sites today. Besides the selection, Swan left a legacy that included popularization of Old World, Burgundian winemaking methods that included manual punch downs, use of French oak barrels for aging, and experiments with whole cluster fermentation. His wines were legendary for their age ability.

I found three vintners in particular that were able to shed some light on why pilots are attracted to the wine business: Brad Alper, winegrower and owner of Square Peg Winery in Sebastopol, Sonoma County, Chris London, owner of Spring Hill Vineyard in Petaluma, Sonoma County (pictured), and Robert A. Morus, owner and winegrower of Phelps Creek Winery in the Columbia Gorge region of Oregon. My interviews with them revealed many parallels as well as contrasts between the wine business work and airline pilot.

As far as parallels, wine growing and winemaking require one to think ahead as does flying. Attention to weather and seasons is another commonality. Like flying, growing grapes requires one to stay ahead of problems. As Brad told me, "Pilots live by the adage that never let your aircraft enter airspace that you mind hasn't already penetrated." Both occupations require precision and a knowledge of science.

There are many occupational contrasts to consider. Many airline pilots become involved in wine while still employed, and a number of them retire early to focus on their winery or wine growing activities. The pilots who have left flying to become winegrowers or winemakers or both share several traits. They wanted a new challenge and the opportunity to become something more than just pilots. Being a pilot for many years had become easy and boring by its sameness. Also, pilots are risk adverse so the wine business offers an opportunity to escape their comfort zone. Growing wine grapes and making wine is risky but the decisions involved are not as stressful as those associated with flying.

When a pilot exits an aircraft after a flight, they have nothing to show for their work other than a paycheck. When a pilot retires, they have nothing to fall back on and have nothing to sell. As a winegrower, winery owner or winemaker, they can work until the day they die and every hour they work is for themselves. Not only can you make our own paycheck, you have something that can be sold.

Flying, and in particular international flying, is not good for one's health. Long haul all-night flights are detrimental to one's health. Working with the land outdoors offers a counterweight to the stress of commuting and flying in a confined cockpit. Robert pointed out, "Pilots are led to grapes as part of the balance of life. Farming vineyards and winemaking balance a technical, high stress profession. Chris agreed, "piloting involves always working in a confined environment. On days off, pilots may seek the fresh air and freedom of being outdoors, something that farming offers."

There are some unique practical issues that allow airline pilots to participate in the wine business. Flying schedules are flexible, particularly for captains, and allow pilots to live where they most desire and commute to work. Pilots also enjoy a relatively high income and although over the past fifteen years retirement benefits have been stripped away and wages were stagnant, the current shortage of pilots and increasing profitability of airlines has resulted in strong wage growth.

Robert had an interesting perspective. He told me, "My father was a Pan Am pilot, so I got a glimpse of the 'good old days.' Pan Am practically apprenticed pilots into living high culture. Dining out, drinking fine wine, attending the theater, and appreciating art were things taught by example. Those days are gone, but I think that period left a lasting impression about living a good and interesting life." International pilots often travel to cities near major wine regions and become drawn to visit those areas on trips. Because of their travel perks, commercial pilots can easily visit, say Burgundy, enjoying a free roundtrip flight to Paris.

Chris pointed out that pilots enjoy the perspective of wine regions and vineyard land from the air, an opportunity unique to their profession and an experience that piqued their interest in winegrowing. He also mentioned the enviable lifestyle of winegrowers, the camaraderie among those in the wine business, and the opportunities to meet so many interesting people as attractions of a second career in wine.

Brad summarized the feelings of many pilots who turn to wine as a second career. "My life is so different from where it might have been had I continued flying. I've met so many people that I never would have met and done so many different things. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to have a second dream career."

Although this article is focused on pilots, there are a number of current and former flight attendants who work in the wine industry, Kerry McDaniel Boenisch, owner of McDaniel Vineyards, now Torii Mor Winery, wrote of former flight attendants working in the Oregon wine industry: www.oregonwinepress.com/connecting-flight. Former flight attendants make ideal hospitality workers at wineries. Kerry profiled Silvia Kraft, a former Pan Am flight attendant (1979-1991), who has worked at Anne Amie Winery, Maysara, and St. Innocent Winery. Kraft said, "During my flying career, I learned to anticipate people's needs, ask them questions and make them feel important so they would have a good experience. That's very similar to the customer service experience people expect in a winery."

In the pages that follow, I will lay out short profiles of those who have followed the dual careers of pilot and vintner with ones involved seriously with Pinot Noir receiving the most attention. I am sure there are a number of wineries or vineyards with pilot owners that I have overlooked. I have only included wineries where information was reliably available. Inquires into a number of possible pilot-related wineries received no response.

One interesting thought. Have you ever wondered where the word "flight" originated in connection with sampling several wines in a lineup is in "tasting flight?" According to The Word Detective at www.word-detective.com, "Flight" of wines first appeared in print in 1978 according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). The OED defines a "flight" as "a selection of small portions of a particular type of food or drink, especially wine, intended to be tasted together for the purpose of comparison. "Flight" has been used since the 13th century to mean "a group of things or beings flying through the air together." "Flight" in the wine tasting world was probably adopted to convey the sense of gathering of varied small samples.

Pinot Pilot Profiles

Anderson Oaks Vineyard, Penngrove, CA

Lee Anderson, a retired United Airlines pilot (his wife Cathryn, was a flight attendant), is now a realtor and owner of a tiny .4 acre Pinot Noir vineyard planted to clones 115 and 667 in 2001. The winery's inaugural Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir from the 2004 vintage was crafted by winemaker Leslie Sisters and was released in 2006. Production is about 200 cases annually. Lee also operates the Anderson Oaks Vineyard B&B, a private room in his residence that is for rent through www.airbnb.com. No winery website.

Oswego Hills Vineyard & Winery, West Linn, OR

This property has a long history of ownership dating back to 1852 when Sarah and Richard Whitten immigrated by wagon train to Oregon from Cincinnati, Ohio and settled in Rosemont. A Czech-republic immigrant from Prague, James Spousta bought the farm in 1915 and later sold it to K.B. Hall for whom he worked. Hall built the farm into a world-class equestrian center. In the 1950s, a lumbar baron family, the Morleys, purchased the farm that was 125 acres at the time. In 1996, Jerry and Leslie Marshall (pictured below) bought 36 acres including the barns and original Spousta house from Mrs. Morley's daughter Elizabeth Douris. They had lived a half mile from the farm and equestrian center for twenty-five years and had admired the property all those years. Jerry was an airline pilot with American Airlines who had been raised on a farm in western Pennsylvania and always had the desire to live on a working farm. He retired from the airline in December 2000 and has since worked to restore the property to its original grandeur. A vineyard was planted to Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Marechal Foch from 1997 to 2008 (now 20 acres), and a boutique winery was established. Wines are produced from estate and purchased grapes. Jerry says, "It truly is a joy to live and work on a fully functioning farm. Our family is all involved in some capacity and this involvement will pass through our lineage." Tasting is available on Sundays year round and holiday weekends. Visit www.oswegohills.com.



Pacific Ridge Vineyards, Buellton, CA

Owner Bob Kelly handles all aspects of wine production at this boutique winery while working as an airline captain for Alaska Airlines since 1997. He was a fighter pilot in the U.S. Navy, both active duty and reservist from 1988 to 2008 and is considered an expert in military aviation. Kelly established the winery in 1995 and produces about 1,500 cases of Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah and some Napa Valley Cabernet-based wines from purchased grapes. Kelly also is involved in custom vineyard installation for commercial and residential applications. The winery and tasting room above the winery are located at 35 Industrial Way in Buellton, and are open Thursday through Sunday. I met Kelly at the 2012 World of Pinot Noir and thoroughly enjoyed his Pinot Noir offerings.

Phelps Creek Vineyards, Columbia Gorge, OR

Robert Morus founded Phelps Creek Vineyards to focus on estate grown Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. He was raised in the San Francisco Bay area and experienced the Northern California wine explosion first hand. After serving in the U.S. Air Force, he became a Delta Airlines captain and continues to fly internationally. He was based in Portland, Oregon by choice, allowing him to establish a vineyard that was a sensible commuting distance away from the Portland airport. His first trip to explore the wine districts of Oregon led him to the Columbia Gorge, where he discovered a 60-acre site that was perfect for grapevines. His research indicated that the Hood River Valley site enjoyed about the same rainfall and heat as Oregon's Dundee Hills in the Willamette Valley although the existing vineyards for Pinot Noir in the Columbia Gorge sat at a higher elevation. Morus would admit that his planting of Pinot Noir, that began in 1996 on this site, was a "lucky, slightly educated guess at the time." The first Phelps Creek labeled Pinot Noir was released from the 2002 vintage. Alexandrine Roy, who crafts wines in Gevrey-Chambertain at her family's Domaine Marc Roy, became the Director of Winemaking beginning with the 2012 vintage. Her reserve wine, Phelps Creek Cuvée Alexandrine, is one of Oregon's finest Pinot Noirs. Current production is primarily from estate grown grapes and is about 5,000 cases annually. A tasting room located on the grounds of the Hood River Golf Course is open daily. Visit www.phelpscreekvineyards.com.



Spring Hill Vineyard, Petaluma, CA

Chris London is a captain for United Airlines based in San Francisco, who along with his spouse, Karen, a former flight attendant, bought a property in the western reaches of Petaluma on Spring Hill Road in 1999. 20 acres of Pinot Noir were planted in 2001 including clones 777, 667, 115, Pommard 5, Swan, Camera and Wädenswil 2A. Karen shoulders a majority of the vineyard workload as well as managing 100-130 head of cattle on the farm. The Londons have the largest herd of Waygu cattle in California. Competing in U.S. national cattle competitions, the Londons have accumulated a number of first place ribbons. In 2016, grapes were sold primarily in 2 to 3 ton lots to 7 boutique wineries including Talisman and Waxwing Wine Cellars who bottled vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs. Spring Hill Vineyard grapes are highly sought after and producers are eager for more. Chris is enthralled with the farming aspects of the vineyard and has designed a number of tractor enhancements to facilitate vineyard management.

Square Peg Wines, Sebastopol, CA

I profiled Brad Alper and his transition from airline captain to winegrower and winery owner this year: www.princeofpinot.com/article/1910/ and followed that up with a visit to his SP-SL Vineyard and Square Peg tasting room. Alper was a captain for American Airlines flying out of San Francisco Airport. Along with his spouse, Alanna, he had moved to the Russian River Valley in 1987 from Los Angeles to escape the city life. His schedule became brutally demanding, requiring him to commute to Los Angeles to fly B-777s to London, Tokyo and Shanghai. At age 52, with over 28 years of commercial flying, he decided to throw caution to the wind, retire early, and put all of his energy into a vineyard and wine production. Alper told me, "If I said that I never once looked back or regretted my decision I would be lying to you. It has been pretty scary at times, but there has been a lot of magic, and I am challenged every day. My life is much richer and I am a better person for sure." He had dabbled in wine growing dating back to 1994 but decided to take it seriously. He budded over Zinfandel vines planted in a 12-acre former apple orchard on his property to a Calera selection of Pinot Noir and Dijon "828." The inaugural Square Peg Pinot Noir was released from the 2013 vintage. Alper has engaged veteran winemaker Bill Knuttel to make his wines and is committed to dry farming his vineyard. By good fortune, the vineyard is located in what is now a highly regarded area for Pinot Noir just outside the town of Occidental near Stoetz Lane. Notable vineyards include Chenoweth Ranch, Riddle Ranch, CIRQ's Treehouse, Aubert's UV-SL, Arista's UV Lucky Well, and Dutton Ranch's Morelli Lane and Fox Den. Alper estimates that the Square Peg Estate Vineyard (SP-SL) is located within seven miles of the top 1% of all California Pinot Noir vineyards. 35% of the top scoring Pinot Noirs in a recent issue of *Wine Spectator* were produced from grapes grown in vineyards that are located from 50 feet to 7 miles from SP-SL Vineyard. Visit www.squarepegwinery.com. The tasting room is open by appointment (pictured).

The three wines tasted during my visit this year. The 2014 wines were noticeably better than when I tasted them early in 2017, showing much better oak integration with additional time in bottle and brought directly from the winery's cellar.



2013 Square Peg SP-SL Vineyard Block 8 "828" Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$55.
Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, herbs and spice. Elegantly crafted in a mid weight style, featuring red fruits framed by soft tannins and demure oak in the background. 89-90.

2014 Square Peg SP-SL Vineyard Block 1 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$55. 100% Calera selection. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of earth, mulch, black cherry, rose tea and spice with a delicate thread of oak in the background. Modest, suave tannins with a silky mouthfeel and generous finish.* **90-92.**

2014 Square Peg SP-SL Vineyard Block 8 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$55. Primarily “828” with small addition of Calera selection. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Lovely nose that streams aromas of red berry, blueberry, spice, flower blossom and graham. Impressive balance and elegance with a mid weight core of spiced raspberry, blueberry and black cherry fruit flavors.* **91-93.**

Wine Pilots Profiled

Aluvé Winery, Walla Walla, WA

Kelly and J.J. Menozzi graduated as classmates from the USAF Academy and began a career as Air Force pilots for more than 23 years. The couple's career as Air Force pilots led to more than fifteen moves around the world and this allowed them to visit many nearby wine regions. It was Walla Walla and its wines, however, that they fell in love with on their first visit in 2000 while stationed nearby. They eventually bought a 10-acre property in Walla Walla in 2010, a few years before their retirement, and established their home and a 5-acre estate vineyard. The couple enrolled in the Walla Walla Community College Enology and Viticulture program and worked harvest at local wineries before launching their winery. The winery name, Aluvé, a fanciful combination of Italian words meaning Winged Grape, symbolizes the connection between their two passions: flying for their country and sharing great wine. They currently produce an estate Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay using both estate and purchased fruit. Kelly remarked, "There's a lot that translates from being a pilot into being a winemaker. In both occupations, there's a certain way to do things that is science-based, and then there is the art involved in both flying and winemaking. Both piloting and winemaking require procedures and techniques to follow and the challenges of refining your skills." Visit www.greatnorthwestwine.com/2016/09/16/aluve-winery/.

Black Sheep Wine & Bar, Harpswell, Maine

Owner John VerPlanck is a U.S. Marine veteran and retired airline pilot. He operates a store in Harpswell, Maine, together with spouse Jennifer Laskey VerPlanck. John has written a wine and beer column for a local paper and has authored a book, *Pacific Air 55 is Missing*. Before starting Black Sheep, John lived in California for over thirty years, owned and operated a wine and beer making supply store in Alaska and was a wine store manager before starting Black sheep. Visit www.blacksheepwine.com.

Chandelle Winery, Glen Ellen, CA

This winery has been owned and operated by the Arnold Family since 1986, when it was founded by Robert Arnold and his parents Bruce and Barbara Arnold. The name, Chandelle, is an aviation term used to describe a 180° change in direction and an increase in altitude. The maneuver is a classic test of aircraft performance and pilot skill. The Arnold family has been part of the world of flight since 1911 when Army Lt. and later Five-Star General Hap /Arnold learned to fly from the Wright Brothers. He served in World War II as Chief of Army Air Forces and retired to the family farm in the Sonoma Valley. Barbara Douglas Arnold was the daughter of Donald Douglas Sr.. The Chandelle Winery wines feature aviation art on labels. The winery focuses on Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. Private tasting is available by appointment in Glen Ellen. Visit www.chandellewinery.com.



Chateau Aeronautique Winery, Rives Township, Michigan

This is a unique winery with an airpark lifestyle including vintage airplanes and life in a home with a hanger on a grass runway surrounded by forest. Vintner Lorenzo Lizarralde was born in Texas and grew up in Panama with missionary parents. He developed a passion for flying early in life and obtained a pilot certificate at age 17. After college, he flew 19-passenger Twin Otters based in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, then DC-8 cargo jets based in Miami traveling to Central and South America. He next flew TWA 727s, 757s and 767s based in New York and St. Louis with both domestic and Europe destinations. Since 1998, he has been based in Detroit flying for a major airline including Airbus 330s domestically and to Europe, Asia and Hawaii. He has had a life long dream of living on an airpark and he achieved that dream in Rives Township, near Jackson, Michigan where he parks his 1956 Cessna 172 that he flies to many destinations. Lorenzo has brought home wines from all over the world for years and toured many wineries. Now he not only lives on an airpark, but is totally fulfilled as a vintner. The winery offers dry white and red wines and semi-sweet and sweet wines from Michigan wine grapes. Dry varietals include Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Chardonnay and Riesling. A second tasting room in the Irish Hills is slated for opening in the late fall of 2017d and will incorporate a future vineyard at the site. Visit www.chateauaeronautiquewinery.com.



Flying Leap Vineyards, Elgin, AZ

Three partners, including Mark Beers, Marc Moeller and pilot Tom Kitchens form a team of talented winemakers that grow both red and white wine grapes on two vineyards in southeastern Arizona and produce wines at a winery facility in Elgin, Arizona. They operate four tasting rooms and three fine art galleries. Tom is the creative source of Flying Leap's logo: representing three partners, three vine leaves, an airplane propeller and a variation on the Celtic Knot. Tom handles all the marketing and events for the winery. Visit www.flyingleapvineyards.com.



HAT Ranch Winery, Caldwell, Idaho

Owners Tim and Helen Harless take the HAT Ranch name from their great-grandparents, Jake and Margarete Shields Frison, who created the HAT Ranch homestead as a farm and ranch in 1902. Tim graduated from college with a BS degree in aerospace engineering and became a commercial airline pilot. This allowed him to research various United States wine regions. He took classes in viticulture and enology and used vacation times to do perform internships at California wineries. He chose to settle with his spouse Helen in the Snake River Valley AVA of Idaho because of its ideal grape growing conditions and a strong and emerging winemaking community. HAT Ranch was established as a winery in 2011 and in 2014 the Vale Wine Company was acquired to allow for production of premium wines, both white and red varietals, from Snake River grapes. the tasting room is on the Sunnyslope Wine Trail near Boise Idaho. Visit www.hatranchwinery.com.



Jacksonville Vineyards & Fiasco Winery, Jacksonville, OR

After a career as a U.S. Air Force pilot and airline pilot, Dave Palmer launched a winery with wife Pamela. They are natives of Grants Pass, Oregon, Dave had an early passion for flying hang gliders going back to 1976 and this led him to a career as an Air Force fighter pilot. Upon retiring from the Air Force, he flew cargo planes as an international airline pilot. The Palmers had dreamed of planting a vineyard and establishing a winery for years. Dave spent many hours apprenticing at wineries, reading, and taking weekend courses at University of California at Davis. The vineyard is located 8 miles west of Jacksonville in the Applegate Valley AVA and the winery is a member of the Applegate Valley Wine Trail. Several varietals are produced including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Claret, Syrah, Sangiovese, a Super Tuscan style, Zinfandel, Pinot Grigio and white blends. The winery's tasting room is open Thursday through Monday. Visit www.jacksonvillevineyards.com.



Jordan Vineyard & Winery, Healdsburg, CA

This winery was established in 1972 and inspired by the great wine estates of France. The founders were Francophiles Tom and Sally Jordan, originally from Colorado. They were among the first to create a Bordeaux-styled California Cabernet Sauvignon from Sonoma County's Alexander Valley that was both forward drinking and had age ability. The winery's original enology consultant was the legendary Andre Tchelistcheff, but the winemaker since the original release from the 1976 vintage has been Rob Davis. The Jordans relocated from Colorado in 1979 and settled into a grand chateau that had been completed three years prior, ushering in a new era of sophistication in Sonoma County. Within three years of its inaugural release, Jordan's 1979 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon was awarded Best Cabernet Sauvignon in America by the Beverage Tasting Institute in New York. Jordan wines became very popular with the wine cognoscenti and appeared on restaurant wine lists throughout the country. The Jordans daughter, Judy, founded J Vineyards & Winery in Healdsburg. Their son, John Jordan, a former Navy interrogator, lawyer and pilot, is the current CEO of the winery. Visit www.jordanwinery.com.

Keeling Schaefer Vineyards, Wilcox, AZ

Winemaker Rod Keeling started out as a professional pilot. He flew for multiple jobs including traffic reporter, flight instructor, charter pilot and corporate pilot, but did not fly for commercial airlines. He later worked in business management. A Grgich Hills Zinfandel peaked his interest in wine and led him to buy winemaking kits. His first worthwhile winemaking effort came in 1999. Rod developed a vineyard in the Chiricahua foothills of Arizona, a property he also chose as a retirement home location. The design of both the winery building, completed in 2003, and home, finished in 2008, were inspired by two early 20th century southwestern architects. 2015 was the winery's eleventh commercial vintage. Wines offered include Rhone red and white varietals. A tasting room is located in historic downtown Wilcox, 41 miles away. Visit www.keelingschaefervineyards.com.

Maggie Malick Wine Caves, Purcellville, VA

Winemaker Maggie Malick owns this boutique winery located in Northern Virginia. She grew up in Washington state and joined the U.S. Navy where she met her husband, Mark, a Navy pilot, and later a commercial airline pilot. Along with making wine, Maggie works as an aeronautical engineer and Mark is the vineyard manager. 15 grape varieties are planted on 30 acres among the 215 acres located near Harpers Ferry Historical Park. The winery was opened in 2013 complete with a wine cave. Today, Maggie crafts 10 to 15 different varietals and Sangria. Tasting is available in the winery's wine caves. Visit www.maggiemalickwinecaves.com.



Max'w Wine Dive, Texas

Owners Jerry and Laura Lasco own multiple locations of Max's Wine Dive, a restaurant and wine bar in Texas. Jerry is an "Air Force brat." His father Jerry Lasco Sr., was an Air Force pilot who completed two tours in Vietnam. Jerry Jr. served in the Air Force for fourteen years including fighting in the Gulf War. After discharge, he became a pilot for Continental Airlines for three years before moving to Houston from New York to start a family and assume an assignment. Two days later, on September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners that would decimate the airline industry for months. He was laid off and had to change careers. He had always had a passion for food and wine and in 2002, began work at a Houston Wine Merchant to gain experience. He took classes to earn a Level 1 sommelier certificate from the Court of Master Sommeliers. With borrowed money, Jerry opened a wine bar called The Tasting Room, the first wine bar in Houston that sold wine retail. Several other wine bars followed, and then Max's Wine Dive was created that pairs gourmet comfort food with wines. Visit www.maxswindedive.com.

Montelle Winery, Augusta, Missouri

Current owner and winemaker, Tony Kooyumijan, bought this winery in 1998 that was founded by Clayton Byers in 1970. This is the first winery in Missouri with a distillery. Tony is a third generation vineyard owner whose grandmother immigrated to California from Armenia in 1915 and established a vineyard in the San Joaquin Valley that she operated with her son until 1960. Tony's interest in aviation led him to pursue aviation jobs after college and was eventually hired as a pilot by Ozark Airlines based in St. Louis, The airline later became Trans World Airlines and then American Airlines. As Tony traveled the world, he discovered fine wines in various countries. This led him to reopen the old Weprich Winery in St. Charles, later renamed the Winery of the Little Hills. His first vintage was 1980. In 1988, he moved to Augusta and established the Augusta Winery in an region known as America's first viticultural area. In 1998, Tony bought the Montelle Winery, first established in 1970. In 2001, he retired early from the airlines to devote all his energy to producing wine at Montelle. His wines, which include Vidal Blanc, Norton, Chambourcin, Chardonal and fruit wines have received numerous major awards. Pictured with wife Cindy. Visit www.montelle.com.



Pianetta Winery & Vineyards, Paso Robles, CA

Owner and winemaker John Pianetta served two tours as a Navy pilot in the Vietnam war and flew for commercial and corporate airlines for over 25 years. His farming roots led him to settle on land in San Miguel in 1995 that became Pianetta Winery and Vineyards. The estate vineyard was planted in 1997. His daughter, Caitlin, is involved in the winemaking and vineyard management. Located 15 miles north of Paso Robles, the vineyard consists of 65 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. The winery produces multiple red wine varietals. Visit www.pianettawinery.com.



Robert Turner Wines, Napa Valley, CA

This winery was founded in 2005 by dentist Bob Turner. Dave Earnest, who has worked as the assistant winemaker and in sales and marketing for the winery, retired as a captain with United Airlines flying 777s on international flights, as well as a dual career as a dentist with a practice in Ft. Collins, Colorado. The winery produces about 500 cases annually of Cabernet Franc, Sonoma County Pinot Noir, Grenache Rosé and Chardonnay. Visit www.robertturnerwines.com.

Rombauer Vineyards, Napa Valley, CA

In 1956, Koerner Rombauer joined the California Air National guard, launching his nearly 30-year career as a pilot for military and commercial airlines. He worked for Braniff International Airways based in Dallas, Texas, beginning in 1965. Seeking a small town, agricultural environment, he and his wife Joan moved their children, two horses and five dogs to Napa Valley in 1972, renting a property on Highway 29 initially, and then buying a home on a knoll with 40 acres in St. Helena in 1974. The Rombauers became partners in Conn Creek Winery with Bill Beaver and Bill Collins and learned the wine business. In 1980, they sold their stake in Conn Creek Winery and launched Rombauer Vineyards with the purchase of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from the Stag's Leap District. The winery's first Chardonnay grapes were crushed at a new winery in St. Helena in 1982. This winery became a custom crush facility for wineries such as Dominos, Spottswoode, Duckhorn, Merryvale, Corison, Etude and others. The first Rombauer Chardonnay was released in 1984 at \$12.50 a bottle. Critical acclaim soon followed, popularity of Rombauer Chardonnay continued to grow, and production increased with the acquisition of a number of estate vineyards. In 2015, Rombauer Vineyards celebrated its 35th anniversary as a family owned winery in Napa Valley, operated by Koerner Rombauer and his children. Visit www.roombauer.com.

Terra Bella Vineyards, Paso Robles, CA

Jack and Dotty Hopkins bought a property on the west side of Paso Robles after he retired as a captain with American Airlines and 35 years of flying. Founded in 2001, the winery produces Syrah and Grenach crafted by winemaker Andrew Murray. Jack commutes from his house in Napa Valley to the vineyard in his 1964 Baron twin engine, keeping his pilot skills sharp while supervising the vineyard and winery. Visit www.terrabellavineyards.com.



Volatus Wine, Paso Robles, CA

Lieutenant Hal Schmitt, a Navy fighter pilot, was tasting wine in the hills of western Paso Robles when he met local winemaker Rich Hartenberger and offered to help out during the upcoming harvest. While processing grapes together, they developed a lasting friendship. Hal's Navy career took him around the world and twice he served as a TOPGUN instructor. He spent his free time learning about winemaking from Rich and would visit Paso Robles frequently. After making wine for nine years with Rich, Hal enticed his brother Kevin to join him in making wine of their own. They began with a purchase of a ton of Syrah grapes in 2004 and started Volatus, a Latin word for "flight or flying." Production is now about 500 cases a year of red blends and an Adelaida District Paso Robles Pinot Noir, all crafted at Midnight Cellars in Paso Robles. Visit www.volatuswine.com.



Wood Family Vineyards, Livermore, CA

A family owned winery located in the eastern foothills of the Livermore Valley. Michael Wood is the vineyard manager and his spouse Rhonda is the winemaker. The couple started learning about winemaking while living in Fremont where they planted 18 grapevines in their backyard. In 1996, they bought a Livermore vineyard planted to Merlot and built a home on the property. Rhonda is a self taught winemaker who has worked at other wineries in Livermore to learn the craft. Initially she kept her day job as a commercial pilot commuting to San Francisco International Airport. She flew for US Airways as first officer on Airbus 320, Boeing 737, F100 and BAE 146, and flight engineer on the Boeing 727. US Airways closed the San Francisco hub, and faced with a commute to Philadelphia, she asked for a 30-day leave of absence to focus on the winery. The events of September 11, 2001, then transpired, and US Airways gave her a five-year leave of absence. She resigned at the end of the five years as she became more immersed in winemaking at the winery. Visit www.woodfamilyvineyards.com.

Wooldridge Creek Vineyard & Winery, Grants Pass, OR

In the early 1970s, Ted Warrick was a United Airlines pilot and Mary Warrick was working for TWA, both out of Los Angeles Airport. They decided to move to the Northwest and in the spring of 1976, they bought an 18-acre winery site in Southern Oregon in Grants Pass, and planned their move. After the move was completed the following year, Ted continued to fly for United Airlines and Mary looked after the small original planting of grape vines where the winery is located today. The expanded the vineyard acreage and founded Wooldridge Creek Vineyard in 1978. Today, the vineyard spans 56 acres and is managed, worked and picked by a crew of local Applegate Valley residents including Ted, who retired from United Airlines to focus on winery activities.

Greg Paneltz and Kara Olmo met while doing postgraduate work in enology at Fresno State. Greg had a background in winemaking and Kara was experienced in marketing. On a trip to search for grapes in Southern Oregon, they discovered Wooldridge Creek Vineyard and met Ted. The two couples became business associates and Wooldridge Creek Vineyard became Wooldridge Creek Vineyard & Winery. Wine production began under the Wooldridge Creek label and a new gravity-fed winery opened in 2005.

The winery's name, Wooldridge Creek, is derived from the Wooldridge Creek that runs through the Applegate Valley where the vineyard is located as well as the Wooldridge family who settled the property in the 1850s. Production of 5,000 cases per year includes a number of varietal wines and blends including Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Viognier, Merlot, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Tempranillo. The winery's tasting room in Grants Pass is open daily. For more information, visit www.wcwinery.com.

Emeritus Vineyards, Sebastopol, CA

Brice Cutter Jones was the son and grandson of West Point officers so his career path was clear. He entered the Air Force Academy with the third class admitted and graduated with an engineering degree in 1961. Pilot training followed in 1962 with various flying missions around the globe. During a temporary tour in Europe in 1963, Brice discovered wine. After a two-year assignment to the Republic of Vietnam as a fighter pilot, Brice returned to the United States in 1966 to find the American premium-wine industry beginning to develop. In 1970, he resigned his Air Force commission and entered Harvard Business School to gain the knowledge needed to start his own winery. After 25 years as the head of highly successful Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards, he sold the winery in 1999. That same year, he bought a 115-acre apple orchard near the town of Sebastopol from Don and Marcia Hallberg and this land became the home of Emeritus Vineyards focused on the production of premium Pinot Noir. Visit www.emeritusvineyards.com.

Evergreen Aviation, McMinnville, OR

Del Smith, founder of Evergreen Aviation, a now defunct international cargo airline, built his fleet of airplanes acquired from Pan Am Airlines and ran Evergreen Aviation for more than 50 years. At the headquarters of Evergreen Aviation in McMinnville, he established a vineyard, a winery (Spruce Goose label), an aviation museum complex and waterpark. Del's son, Mike was a wine enthusiast who had his own vineyard at his home in Dundee, was the driving force behind the aviation museum. Veteran Oregon winemaker, Laurent Montalieu, once made wine for Del Smith. In 2015, Jackson Family Wines bought the Evergreen Airlines corporate headquarters buildings across the highway from the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum complex and vineyard and built a large winery.

Keeler Estate, Amity, OR

Craig and Gabriele Keeler have produced wines from 38 acres in the Eola-Amity Hills since 2011. Gabriele was a flight attendant for Pan Am and now works in the winery's tasting room. According to an article in the Oregon Wine Press, www.oregonwinepress.com/connecting-flight, Gabriele said, "I learned how to deliver exceptional service as a Pan Am flight attendant and that translates to delivering exceptional service in the world of wine." Visit www.keelerestatevineyard.com.

Sips of Recently Tasted California Wines

Foley Estates Vineyards & Winery, Los Olivos, CA

There are two series of Pinot Noir reviewed here. The Sta. Rita Hills and Star. Rita Hills Barrel Select bottling are sourced from the Foley Estate Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard. A south-facing hillside location that climbs from 500 to 1,000 feet above sea level, with vines planted in marine-based soils. The climate is consistently cool due to moist ocean breezes that sweep through the property daily. The vineyard is farmed with the attention usually associated with much smaller properties.

The Brand Series of Pinot Noir honors the relatives of vintner Bill Foley who settled the Texas Panhandle in the 1840s as ranchers, cattlemen and Texas Rangers. These wines combine noteworthy barrels from superior sites within the Foley collection of estate vineyards and are meant to unveil a unique facet or interpretation of a designated variety.

Visit www.foleywines.com.

2015 Foley Rancho Santa Rosa Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.68, 2,326 cases, \$40. Harvest Brix 24.5°-27.0°. 100% de-stemmed with no crushing. 4-day cold soak in open-top fermenters, inoculated yeast fermentation, manual punch downs, aged 18 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 28% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of strawberry, cherry and baking spices. Nicely composed, with bright flavors of spiced dark red fruits and a hint of cola and tobacco. Well-integrated tannins, with a cherry finish that really grabs hold.* **92.**

2015 Foley Barrel Select Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.65, 521 cases, \$60. Rancho Santa Rosa East Vineyard. 100% de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak in open-top fermenters, inoculated yeast fermentation, manual punch downs, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 100% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is quite reserved, offering only demure aromas of peppery spice, blackberry, underbrush and seasoned oak. Sleek and silky in the mouth with weighty flavors of purple and black berries accented with peppery, walnut oak. Ripe tannins ply the background, and the wine finishes with a quenching burst of fruit. The wine picks up interest and expression over time in the glass indicating it needs more time in the cellar for full enjoyment.* **93.**

2015 Foley T Anchor Ranch Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.68, 691 cases, \$55. Brand Series. Rancho Santa Rosa East Vineyard. Harvest Brix 24.5°-27.0°. 100% gently de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak in open-top fermenters, manual punch downs, free-run transferred to French oak barrels for 18 months aging, 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Attractive aromas of dark red fruit compote, brioche and dusty oak. Sleek and polished in the mouth, with a middleweight core of blueberry and cherry fruits backed by noticeable oak input. The lightest sap in the 2015 Brand Series lineup, with a rather delicate character. My only nit would be that the wine falls short of impressive mid palate and finishing presence, but is otherwise delectable.* **90.**

2015 Foley Bar Lazy S Ranch Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.67, 609 cases, \$45. Brand Series. Rancho Santa Rosa East Vineyard. Harvest Brix 24.5°-27.0°. 100% gently de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak in open-top fermenters, manual punch downs, free-run wine aged in French oak barrels for 18 months, 50% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lovely melange of cherry, strawberry, earth and sawdust aromas. A distinctive wine with mid weight flavors of cherry, raspberry and exotic spices shot through with a floral, tutti-frutti note. Barrel treatment is well coordinated, and the wine finishes long and generous.* **93.**



2015 Foley JA Ranch Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.71, 685 cases, \$55. Brand Series. Rancho Santa Rosa East Vineyard. Harvest Brix 24.5°-27.0°. 100% gently de-stemmed with no crushing, 4-day cold soak in open top fermenters, manual punch downs, free-run juice aged in French oak barrels, 30% new, for 18 months. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of raspberry, cherry and cola are echoed in the flavors in this mouth filling wine that soars with fruit goodness and vibrancy due to high natural acidity. The oak treatment is reigned in, the tannins are in step, and the fruity finish leaves special aromatic memories.* **93.**

Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Healdsburg, CA

My 2016 Winery of the Year, Gary Farrell wines are stylistically unique in that they are largely natural acid-driven wines that shun significant oak intervention and appeal to those who like freshness. This style was never more evident than in the 2015 vintage. The 2015 Chardonnays and Pinot Noir were a bit less ripe and rich than the 2014 Chardonnays and Pinot Noir such that the wines show more racy acidity and leanness. As a result, there are a little high-strung but should age extremely well. Theresa told me, "I think the wines can be appreciated for many years to come. they're definitely too young to drink now though." I much preferred the 2014 vintage wines but that is a personal preference. Visit www.garyfarrellwinery.com.

2015 Gary Farrell Hallberg-Dijon Clones Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.69, 818 cases, \$60. Released September 2017. Sourced from the 100-acre Hallberg Vineyard located just west of the town of Sebastopol. Clones 777 and 667. 100% gently de-stemmed, 4 to 7-day cold soak, 10 days post fermentation extended maceration, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and aged 10 months on the primary lees in French oak barrels 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Heady aromas of boysenberry, earthy flora and bark. Noteworthy attack of mid weight boysenberry and blackberry fruits accented with baking spices and pine needle. Leaner than usual in this vintage, with bright natural acidity, immersed tannins, and some expansiveness on the finish.* **90.**



2015 Gary Farrell Toboni Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.39, TA 0.69, 911 cases, \$55. Released September 2017. The Toboni Oakwild Ranch Vineyard is located in the Santa Rosa Plain, just south of the winery. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Gently 100% de-stemmed, 4 to 7-day cold soak, 7 to 10-days post fermentation extended maceration, inoculated for malolactic fermentation and aged 10 months on the primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas of black cherry, rose tea, and tobacco arrive very slowly over time in the glass. Discreet concentration of black cherry and boysenberry fruits accented with cola and piney oak. Ripe, balanced tannins are supportive, and the natural acidity adds vigor. The wine is definitely less sappy than its 2014 counterpart that has more staying power in the mouth and finish.* **90.**

2015 Gary Farrell Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir. 12.5% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.68, 555 cases, \$70. Released September 2017. Pommard selection from the legendary Q Block, considered the most prestigious Pinot Noir block on this famous site. 100% gently de-stemmed, 4 to 7-day cold soak, 7 to 1-day post fermentation extended maceration, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and aged 16 months on the primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Lovely mix of red cranberry, red cherry, spice and pipe smoke aromas with the slightest green note. Lighter in weight, feature delicate flavors of red fruits backed by gossamer tannins. Flavors of tobacco and dried herbs add to the mix. The wine finishes with a quenching Maraschino Cherry aroma.* **89.**

2015 Gary Farrell Russian River Valley Selection Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.8% alc., pH 3.24, TA 0.71, 4,368 cases, \$35. Sourced from seven vineyards anchored by Westside Farms and Bacigalupi vineyards. Harvest Brix 21°-23°. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented in 30 to 40% new French oak barrels for 9 months. 100% MLF. Both traditional barrels and 500-L puncheons were used. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Delicate aromas of lemon oil, white flower blossom and nutty oak. More enjoyable in the mouth, with a citrus driven core of fruit. Crisp, clean, lean and silky, with a nut oil thread in the background.* **88.**

2015 Gary Farrell Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.5% alc., pH 3.26, TA 0.65, 334 cases, \$55. Released September 2017. The original historic block of Chardonnay at Bacigalupi Vineyard is one of the main components of the Bacigalupi Chardonnay blend. Harvest Brix 22°-23°. Whole cluster pressed, inoculated with Montrachet yeast. Barrel aged in 40% new French and puncheons on the right amount of lees for 8 months. 100% MLF. A barrel selection. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Shy aromas of lemon, lime, green shrub, ocean breeze and slightest oak. Uplifting flavors of lemon, apple and pear in a harmoniously styled wine with a silky mouthfeel and a quenching, lemony finish. A bit too lean and racy for my favor, but will appeal to those who seek out acid-driven Chardonnay.* **90.**

2015 Gary Farrell Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.5% alc., pH 3.17, TA 0.76, 505 cases, \$60. Majority of grapes from River Block clone 5, planted in 1989 with the balance from a field selection planted in 1993 and Allen Block 1, cone 15, planted in 1995. Harvest Brix 22°-23°. Whole cluster pressed, inoculated with Montrachet yeast, and barrel aged in 40% new French oak barrels and puncheons on the right amount of lees for 8 months. A barrel selection. *Moderately dark golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of roasted oats, caramel and warm brioche lead off but the oak influence dissipates over time in the glass. A riper fruit profile greets the palate, including flavors of lemon drop, pineapple and toasted almond. The generous and lingering soprano finish features green apple and citrus notes. Again, this wine will appeal to acid hounds.* **91.**

Roger Roessler Wines, Sonoma, CA



2016 Roger Roessler Wines Black Pine Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.74, TA 0.563, \$30. Sourced from three vineyards with the majority coming from a western Russian River Valley site farmed in Goldridge soils. Additional sources come from the Carneros region in the Sonoma Coast and the western edge of the Petaluma Gap. Winemaker Drew Huffine. Native and organic French yeast fermentation. Aged 10 months on lees in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of turned earth, mulch and tobacco lead to a full-bodied wine featuring full-ripened black fruits framed by firm but not astringent tannins. A thread of tobacco oak plies the background. I wished for more finesse, nuance and acidity.* **88.**

2015 Roger Roessler Wines Big Bend Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.25, TA 0.699, \$30. Sourced from three sites in the Sonoma Coast AVA. Whole cluster pressed, organic French yeast fermentation, native malolactic fermentation, barrel fermented in tight grain French oak barrels, 30% new, for 18 months. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. A richly fruited style with aromas and flavors of lemon creme, pineapple, baked pear, butter. There is adequate natural acidity to temper the sappy fruit giving the wine a vibrant character. Slightly creamy in texture, with a refreshingly juicy finish.* **90.**

Terragena, Myers Flat (Humboldt County), CA

A small, of-the-grid winery in Humboldt County located on a ridge top between the north and south forks of the Eel River above Humboldt Redwoods State Park. Terragena is a latin word meaning “born of the earth.” Owner and winemaker Chris Buchanan began his winemaking career working with Derek Rohiffs of Bravium Winery. The winery’s focus is Pinot Noir. The wines are elegant styled with lower alcohols. Visit www.terragnavineyard.com.

2014 Terragena Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. 13.0% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.69, 72 cases, \$39. Released July 28, 2016. Inaugural release from this iconic vineyard located in the deep end of the Anderson Valley. Clones 777, 667, 115, 37, 538 and Pommard. Aged in Hungarian and French oak barrels. *Light ruby red color in the glass. The perfume of cherry, oak spice, forest and pipe smoke is appealing. Light in weight with a core of red cherry and red cranberry fruit laced with a burnt tobacco note. Exquisite balance, with a satiny mouthfeel, and a modest finish. The fruit seems to have been harvested a little short of full ripeness but that may be the intended style.* **89.**



2014 Terragena Seppa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir. 13.0% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.573, 168 cases, \$39. Released April 2017. The Seppa Vineyard is a family owned and sustainable vineyard planted in 2001 and located in the Petaluma Gap region of the Sonoma Coast. 100% 115 clones. Aged in a combination of 1/3 new, 1/3 used and 1/3 neutral French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Shy earthbound aromas of clay and flora with a hint of dark berries. Light to mid weight in style, offering an assortment of dark red and purple fruits backed by complimentary oak. Forward drinking, with adequate structure for aging, and noticeable finishing persistence.* **89.**

2016 Terragena Abbassi Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay 11.8% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.69, 71 cases, \$29. Released June 1, 2017. 40+-year-old Chardonnay vines planted on .75 acre, clone 37 on 110R rootstock planted in a silty to sandy loam. Aged in 2/3 neutral and 1/3 new French oak barrels coopered in Hungary. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of green apple, yeast and parchment. Austere and racy in style with flavors of lemon-lime, greenest apple and papaya embellished with high-strung acidity and a soprano finish. This wine is not particularly enjoyable on its own, but may be more appealing with the appropriate food to balance the bright acidity.* **86.**

Two Sisters, Los Olivos, CA

The Two Sisters are named after Bill and Carol Foley's daughters, Lindsay and Courtney. The wines come from the best blocks of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in Lindsay's and Courtney's vineyards in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. These limited-production bottling feature heritage, heirloom and select clones chose for their compatibility with the terroir of each vineyard block. Vinted and bottled by Two Sisters, Los Olivos, CA. Visit www.foleyfamilywines.com.

2015 Two Sisters Lindsay's Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.68, \$49.99. Clones 667 and 777. Average harvest Brix 25°. 100% de-stemmed with no crushing and cold soaked in open-top fermenters. Manual punch downs. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 80% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose is largely dominated by oak-related aromas. Enviably core of oak-kissed purple grape, Hoisin sauce and black cherry flavors wrapped in modest tannins. Seductively silky in texture with noticeable purity of fruit, Better oak integration, more fruit aromas and overall a better drinking experience when re-tasted two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle* **90.**

2015 Two Sisters Lindsay's Vineyard Reserve Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.67, 301 cases. \$80. Extremely heavy bottle. Clones 667 and 777. Average harvest Brix 25°. 100% de-stemmed with no crushing and cold soaked in open-top fermenters. Manual punch downs. 70% MLF. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 100% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Splendid aromas of black cherry, earth, herbs and toasty oak. Rich, full and sweet on the palate in a full-bodied style offering a plush black cherry fruit core accented by toast and licorice notes. The tannins are folded in and their is enough acidity for freshness. This is clearly a serious wine with intentions, but it will need more time in bottle to integrate more of the oak and reach full expression. Exceptional when tasted two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **93.**



Sips of Recently Tasted Oregon Pinot Noir

Love & Squalor, McMinnville, OR

2015 Love & Squalor Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.54, 1,100 cases, \$28. Release November 2017. A multi-vineyard, multi-appellation blend intended to capture the essence of the vintage. Clones are Pommard, 667, 777, 113, 114, 115, "828," and 23. Grapes were mostly de-stemmed (3% whole cluster). Small-lot fermentations were not inoculated and punched down by hand. Aged in neutral French oak barrels for 18 months. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Faint aromas of black cherry, blackberry and Nutella. Straightforward mid weight flavors of black cherry and raspberry backed by significant tannins that tilt the balance. Decent attack of fruit and mid palate richness, and a juicy, cherry-fueled finish. No oak involved. 87.*

2015 Love & Squalor Temperance Hill Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.73, TA 0.52, 50 cases, \$52. Release spring 2018. Vineyard is one of Oregon's most esteemed. Planted in 1981 and now spreads over 100 acres of volcanic soil. Farmed by Das Crisp and his team. Most likely 100% clone 667. 100% de-stemmed, un-inoculated fermentation, and aged in mostly neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Comforting aromas of berry compote and fertile earth. A mid weight melange of raspberry, cherry and blueberry fruits bring the wine a regal presence. Satiny in texture, with a remarkable sweet fruited finish of uncommon pleasure. 91.*



2015 Love & Squalor Sunny Mountain Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir. 14.4% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.59, 50 cases, \$52. Release spring 2018. This vineyard is located above the town of Monroe in the southernmost reaches of the Willamette Valley AVA. 12 acres tended by Steve Price, a former Professor of Viticulture at Oregon State University in Corvallis. The vineyard was planted in 2005 to Pommard, "828," and Mariafeld clones in sedimentary Belpine soil. 100% de-stemmed, short cold soak, un-inoculated fermentation, manual punch downs, aged in neutral French oak barrels for 18 months. Racked twice before bottling. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose is earthbound, with aromas of earthy flora and underbrush. On the palate, this mid weight plus wine offers a stunningly intense attack of berry flavors including black raspberry, blackberry and Marionberry. Rich and lush, with matched, sultry tannins and a fruit-filled finish that lingers. The wine reflects its warmer terroir origins. 92.*

2014 Love & Squalor Temperance Hill Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.53, 25 cases (1 barrel), \$52. In release. Clones are Pommard, 667, 113 and 114. 10% whole cluster, 90% de-stemmed, short cold soak, un-inoculated fermentation, manual punch downs. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 66% once-filled. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of boysenberry, blackberry jam and nutty oak. The mid weight core of sweet, sappy black fruits is well-spiced. There are harmonious tannins and acidity, an appealing earthiness, an easygoing texture and some invigorating fruit on the finish, but the wine loses my interest when tasted several hours later. 89.*

Penner-Ash Wine Cellars, Newberg, OR

Lynn Penner-Ash is working her 20th harvest at Penner-Ash Wine Cellars and 30th in Oregon in 2017. Lynn and husband Ron founded Penner-Ash Wine Cellars 20 years ago and much has changed since then. Lynn notes that equipment was hard to find. Their architect had never designed a winery from start to finish, let alone a gravity-fed design. There were only 49 wineries then compared to 723 now. Penner-Ash Wine Cellars is now owned by Jackson Family Estates, but Lynn remains the winemaker. Except for the Pas de Nom, that is primarily a winery-exclusive bottling, these wines are available both through the winery and select markets nationally. Visit www.pennerash.com.

2015 Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.54, 9,100 cases, \$40. Sourced from 13 vineyards. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 29% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. This nose is entirely seductive over time, exhibiting aromas of black cherry, fertile soil and warm spices. A very forward and friendly wine featuring middleweight flavors of black cherry and blackberry fruits that have an expansive presence in the mouth and finish with stellar length. There is a significant tannic backbone and the right touch of nutty oak.* **90.**

2015 Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Estate Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir. 14.1% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.55, 1,000 cases, \$65. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 27% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. An arsenal of dark red cherry and berry fruits emerge over time in the glass. Slow to give up its charms initially but regal and great when tasted later in the day from a previously opened bottle. A mid weight assortment of purple and black fruits are fresh and deep, backed by a taut tannic spine and enough acidity for freshness. The harmonious mouthfeel draws you back to the glass and nuances of spice and earth show up in time. Built for aging, this wine will benefit from more time in the cellar and may be deserving of an even higher score over time.* **93.**



2015 Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Zena Crown Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.74, TA 0.49, 500 cases, \$65. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas arrive over time in the glass, including blackberry, cassis, toast, warm spices and bacon. Mid weight plus in weight, with a substantial black fruit load balanced by burly tannins. Oak is deftly matched to the fruit that has an earthy underpinning. The wine was considerably better when tasted later in the day from a previously opened bottle and may deserve a higher score with a few years in the cellar.* **92.**



2015 Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Pas de Nom Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.78, TA 0.47, 350 cases, \$125. Sourced from Bella Vida, Shea, Penner-Ash Estate, Elevée, Hyland and Zena Crown vineyards. Select barrels in the cellar. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new, 25% one-year-old, 30% two-year-old and 5% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Easy to find superlatives for this special wine with no name. Intense aromas of cherry, rose petal and forest floor, broadening over time to deeper tones. Delicious mid weight black raspberry, black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors that offer pleasing density and a mouth coating finish. Stunning mid palate presence with a dreamy texture, integrated tannins, and a deft touch of toasty, peppery oak. Considerably better when tasted later in the day from a previously opened bottle and still embraceable two days later. This is a celebratory wine for special occasions.* **95.**

2015 Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Oregon Syrah 14.9% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.66, 495 cases, \$40. Sourced from six Oregon vineyards in warmer growing regions. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 35% one-year-old, 15% two-year-old and 20% neutral. I don't review Syrah but I have a fondness for Oregon cool climate Syrah so what the heck. *Dark garnet color in the glass. A serenade of cassis, white pepper and tobacco aromas lead off. Full-bodied and robust with hefty tannins. A man's wine with plenty of delectable blackberry, boysenberry and black currant fruit accented with spice. Impressive length in the mouth with a persistent finish. This wine needs a big ribeye steak. I had my neighbors try this one since they like bigger wines and they went ga-ga over it.* **92.**

Tendril Wine Cellars, Gaston, OR

2008 was the first vintage crafted by noted winemaker Tony Rynders under his own personal Tendril label. The name Tendril, honors the grapevine that is the foundation for all truly great wine. The wines reviewed below was created by Tony as his signature five-course "meal" of Pinot Noir to show the range of Oregon's Willamette Valley. Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon round out Tendril's portfolio. Tony holds a Master's degree in Enology and Viticulture from the University of California at Davis. He gained winemaking experience with harvests in Napa, San Jose, Friuli, and Tuscany. His winemaking positions include two years at Argyle as assistant winemaker, three years at Hogue Cellars as red winemaker and ten years at Domaine Serene as head winemaker.

Tony has a longstanding relationship with Saffron fields and Mt. Richmond vineyards in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA and Clay Court and Carabella vineyards in the Chehalem Mountains. These growers emphasize minimal intervention and sustainable farming, and open their doors to Tony, who is continually engaged with each site throughout the growing season. In 2013, Tony planted a 19-acre estate vineyard named Maverick in Yamhill-Carlton. Maverick is home to 4.5-acres of Chardonnay clones 95 and 765, and 6 acres of Pinot Noir planted to clone 943 and California heritage selections of Swan and Calera and Mt. Eden clone.

The winery is home to one of Oregon's only seated winemaker-led tastings personally presented by Tony Rynders. To reserve, contact Tony at tastings@tendrillwines.com or phone 503-858-4524. Visit www.tendrillwines.com.

2014 Tendril Extrovert 14.1% alc., 367 cases, \$48. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 43% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Very demure aromas of cherry and sweet oak. Light to mid weight in style with cherry and blueberry flavors that extend the juicy finish. An easygoing and forward style with enough tannin to pair with the fruit. Very solid wine, and embodies its "extrovert" name, but lacks aromatic intrigue even over time in the glass. 89.*

2014 Tendril Mt. Richmond 14.1% alc., 104 cases, \$60. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. A dry-farmed vineyard planted in sedimentary soils west of Yamhill owned by Adam Campbell of Elk Grove Winery. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromatics of cherry, rose and nutty oak lead to a middleweight wine that is both husky and sleek, as well as harmonious. Intriguingly earthy, with a dark cherry and berry core of fruit framed by the typical tannins of Yamhill-Carlton. The wine finishes with exceptional joy and length. 92.*

2013 Tendril Tightrope 13.5% alc., 150 cases, \$64. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 67% new. The goal of this wine is to capture the best qualities of the vintage. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, blueberry compote and white rose petal draw you into the glass. The tasty cherry core saturates the mid palate with goodness. Impressive vibrancy and length in an easy to like wine that ends with plenty of aromatic cherry pleasure. 91.*



2013 Tendril C Note Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 73 cases, \$100. Aged 17 months in 100% new French oak barrels with 3-year, air-dried staves. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. An array of pleasurable aromas arrive in the glass including dark cherry, spice box, burnt tobacco and a feminine perfume. The oak treatment is overbearing upon opening, but when the wine was tasted later in the day, the oak had integrated beautifully. The wine is mid weight in style with waves of black cherry and dark berry fruits accented with a touch of oak-driven tobacco. The ripe, very fine-grain tannins create textural charm. Perhaps the most striking feature of this wine is the extra, I mean extra, long finish. Decant or keep your hands off this another couple of years. Clearly a special wine. 94.*



2014 Tendril Chardonnay 13.5% alc., 195 cases, \$40. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. Winemaker Tony Rynders has crafted Oregon Chardonnay since 1998. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The nose leads with scents of buttery brioche, lemon custard and nutty oak. Discreetly rich in the mouth, with flavors of lemon, pineapple and golden apple. Slightly creamy, with a restrained oak imprint. A thoroughly satisfying wine with commendable balance and spirit. 92.*

2014 Tendril Pretender 14.1% alc., 124 cases, \$60. Aged 15 months in 0% new French oak barrels. A Pinot Noir Blanc wine in which a red varietal is "pretending" to be a white wine. Winemaker Tony Rynders introduced this style of Pinot Noir to Oregon while working at Domaine Serene. *Moderately light golden yellow color with a slight pink tinge. Aromas of cut apple, poached pear and brown butter lead to a polished wine in the mouth offering flavors of apple, white grape, watermelon and subtle spice and nuttiness. Satiny, even slightly viscous on the palate, with a polished demeanor and a quenching finish. Still fine when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, if not a little bit more enjoyable. I am not a big fan of Pinot Noir Blanc, so the wine may be slightly underscored. 91.*

Supermarket Pinot

Most supermarkets stock a variety of domestic Pinot Noir, primarily those brands that enjoy widespread distribution. The most expensive and well-known offerings are on the top shelf and the prices and quality then descend with each succeeding lower shelf to the bottom fourth or fifth shelf. Many supermarkets now offer 30% off the market's discounted price with the purchase of six bottles. I randomly plucked seven bottles off the second shelf to see what these value priced Pinot Noir offer in quality for the price. Of the seven, there were three that I would hardly recommend. The first price listed is the retail price offered at Ralph's Supermarket and the second figure is the 30% discount for buying any six bottles of wine.

2014 alta maria Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$15.70 - \$4.71, screwcap. Produced and bottled by alta maria Vineyards, St. Helena, CA. Winemakers are James Ontiveros and Joseph Wagner. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose is not particularly appealing, offering scents of fertile earth, crushed purple grapes and oak splinter. Light to mid weight in style, featuring a core of blackberry fruit offset with a noticeable overlay of burnt toast. Soft tannins and a very modest finish. This wine has the backbone of Pinot Noir but the burnt tone may or may not appeal.* **86.**

2014 Evolution Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$31.99 - \$9.60. Produced and bottled by Sokol Blosser Winery, Dundee, OR. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Upon opening, there is delicate aromas of red cherry, cranberry and rose petal but with time in the glass aromas of tobacco, toast and stinky barnyard take over. Light and elegant in style, with a core of red fruits accent with piney oak. Easygoing with balanced tannins and some Dundee Hills typicality but lacks interest.* **86.**



2015 J Vineyards & Winery Monterey County, Sonoma County and Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$24.27 - \$7.28. Produced and bottled by J Vineyards & Winery, Healdsburg, CA. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry, raspberry, and compost hold up in the glass over time. Very satisfying, with a middleweight core of fresh black fruits accented by warm spices. Good attack, balanced tannins, a silky mouthfeel and some finishing generosity. A steal at 17 bucks.* **90.**



2015 Martin Ray Sonoma County Pinot Noir. 13.8% alc., \$22.84 - \$6.85, screwcap. Vinted and bottled by Martin Ray Winery, Santa Rosa, CA. Bill Batchelor is the winemaker. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of dark cherry, timber and Asian 5-spice. A friendly mid weight wine with flavors of black cherry and black raspberry framed by easygoing tannins and juicy acidity. A touch of oak adds interest. I like this wine for everyday drinking.* **89.**



2013 We Believe Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$38.56 - \$8.57, screwcap. Cellared and bottled by Chateau Diana, Healdsburg, CA. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of dark cherry and berry, with hints of Herbs de Provence and tutti-frutti. Good freshness and vibrancy in a mid weight wine with flavors of Bing cherry, spice and cola. Good oak harmony and gentle tannins that have moderated with additional bottle age.* **89.**

2014 Z. Alexander Brown Uncaged Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$18.56 - \$5.57. Cellared and bottled by Z. Alexander Brown Wines, Napa, CA. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. This wine exhibits a very ripe fruit profile offering aromas and flavors of slightly roasted black cherry, blackberry and rhubarb. There is noticeable oak overlay with notes of tobacco, hay and anise chiming in. The texture is satiny and the wine has a good tannic backbone.* **87.**