



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 11, Issue 39 February 22, 2019

The most expensive part of having kids is all the Pinot Noir you have to drink

Loring Wine Company

It is hard to believe that I first wrote about Brian Loring, the owner and winemaker at Loring Wine Company, seventeen years ago. Looking back, Brian attributes his early interest in Pinot Noir to time working in a Southern California wine store during college where he was able to experience fine red Burgundy. This led him to explore domestic Pinot Noir in the 1980s, but it wasn't until he tried the wines of Calera (see reviews of 2015 vintage in this issue) that he was completely hooked. His early job was software engineering, but his calling became Pinot Noir.

Brian's friendship with winemaker Norm Beko of Cottonwood Canyon Winery led him to a start in the wine business. While participating in the 1997 crush, he made two barrels of his own Pinot Noir and the Loring Wine Company (a homage to Josh Jensen and the Calera Wine Company) was launched.

Brian was one of the early successful boutique California Pinot Noir producers who entered the field cold so to speak, without any formal winemaking education. Besides Norm Beko, Brian attributes much of his inspiration and success to Adam Lee, the founder and winemaker of Siduri Winery. Brian inspired a number of others to enter the Pinot race, including Greg Piatigorski (Alcina Cellars, Iskaranu), Jamie Kutch (Kutch Wines), and Andrew Vingiello (A.P. Vin).

The success of Loring Wine company was predicated on Brian's insistence in acquiring top-notch Pinot Noir grapes from prestigious vineyards. He admitted to lacking experience as a winegrower, so he allowed vineyard owners to farm his blocks as they farmed the ones they used for their own labels. For years, Brian has featured photos of the vineyards designated on his labels.



LORING
WINE COMPANY

2017

Clos Pepe Vineyard

PINOT NOIR

Brian's style initially was typical of many California Pinot Noirs, offering dark hues, and full-bodied, ripe, showy and sappy fruit with a generous French oak imprint. Over the years, Brian has refined his style, as he currently

told me, “The wines have become generally lighter in style. Still relatively big, but not like they used to be. As a result, we’re using much less new oak these days (only about 15%).”

The Pinot Noir grapes are fully de-stemmed, dry ice is added for cold soak, the grapes are inoculated with Assmanshausen yeast, punched down once a day, and spend about 21 days in the fermenting bins. The wines are raked once post malolactic fermentation and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered after 10 months in barrel. As Brian says, “Your basic, low intervention stuff.”

The main change in grape sources over the past few years has been a move closer to home with no more Sonoma fruit. The reason is a combination of Keefer Ranch’s sale, and the time it took to go up to the Russian River Valley to sample fruit during harvest. Since the Loring Wine Company Lompoc winery is still operated by Brian, his sister, two winery employees including assistant winemaker Rachel Silkowski (see the Say When wines reviewed in this issue), and his 85-year-old mother, it became too challenging to leave the winery for a few days a week to check fruit. Currently, all grapes are sourced from the Sta. Rita Hills and Santa Lucia Highlands. This provides more focus as well.

Loring Wine Company was one of the first to use screw caps on domestic Pinot Noir.

I chose Loring Wine company for the lead article in this issue because all the 2017 Pinot Noir and Chardonnay offerings were compelling. I agree with Brian, who said, “We really like the 2017s. Super soft and sexy.”

Loring Wine Company wines are sold primarily through a mailing list The Loring Wine Company tasting room is on Industrial Hwy in Buellton, in the same parking lot as Industrial Eats and Alma Rosa’s Tasting Room. Tasting is available Thursday from Monday. Winery visits are by appointment only and can be arranged through the website at www.loringwinecompany.com. All wines reviewed here were released on October 1, 2018.



2017 Cooper Jaxon Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir pH 3.61, 1,000 cases, \$29, screw cap. A new blend in honor of Cooper Jaxon Loring, the next generation of Loring, sourced from several vineyard sites in the Sta. Rita Hills and Santa Lucia Highlands. Clones are Pisoni, 113, 115, 667, 777 and 23. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromatically pleasing scents of black cherry, earthy flora, spice and a hint of oak. Light to mid weight in concentration, with fresh flavors of dark red and black cherry fruit with hints of red licorice, spice, oak and earth. Easygoing, with commendable balance and some finish. 90.*

2017 Loring Wine Company Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.72, 400 cases, \$29, screw cap. Sourced from Rancho La Viña, Kessler-Haak and Sierra Madre vineyards. Clones 113, 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Subdued aromas of dark fruits, tea leaves and char. Very ripe and sweet black cherry, blackberry and black raspberry fruit flavors. Mouth filling extraction with soft tannins and good fruit intensity on the finish. The texture is plush and seductive but the wine does not have the vibrancy of the Cooper Jaxon. 88.*



2017 Loring Wine Company Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.61, 400 cases, \$38, screw cap. Clones 113, 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Likable aromas of dark cherry, ripe peach and nutty oak. A middleweight style with a tasty core of nicely spiced black cherry fruit and an underpinning of nutty oak. Excellent harmony and easy approachability. 91.*



2017 Loring Wine Company Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.65, 400 cases, \$38, screw cap. Sourced from rosella’s, Sierra Mar, Boekenoogen and Ranch La Viña vineyards. Clones 115, 667, 23 and Pisoni. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black fruits and pipe smoke lead to an abundance of dark red and black fruits that caress the palate. Nicely composed with a deft touch of oak and good harmony, finishing with impressive purpose. 91.*



2017 Loring Wine Company Rancho La Viña Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.68, 200 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of blueberry, blackberry and BBQ spice rub. Long in the mouth and finish with a perfectly ripened core of black cherry, black raspberry and blackberry fruit embellished with a dash of spice. Sleek in texture,*

refined in character, with a strikingly long finish. 94.

2017 Loring Wine Company Kessler-Haak Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.71, 200 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 113, 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of fertile earth and wine cave. A charge of boisterous black raspberry and blackberry fruit greets the palate, fills every nook and cranny in the mouth, and exits with aplomb. Velvety in texture with noticeable, but not intrusive tannins. 92.*



2017 Loring Wine Company Clos Pepe Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.59, 400 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 115 and 777. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Uplifting aromas of black cherry and spice rub lead to a mid weight plus styled wine with a generous core of delicious black cherry and purple berry fruit. Supple tannins provide marvelous support and the energetic acidity adds vigor. A compelling wine with an extremely long finish. 94.*

2017 Loring Wine Company Sierra Mar Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.62, 200 cases, \$54, screw cap. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A cheerful wine bursting with fresh cherry and berry goodness in a mid weight style. Supportive tannins, a seamless texture and a trail of black cherry and black raspberry on the seductive finish urges another sip. 93.*



2017 Loring Wine Company Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.62, 200 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 667 and Pisoni. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Grand aromas of purple grape, boysenberry and sandalwood. My first word after taking a sip was Wow! An ephemeral wine with flat-out delicious, well-spiced, dark red cherry fruit that really captures the palate with goodness. Wondrous harmony with endless aromatic pleasure on the finish. Praise the Lord! Gary Francioni really knows how to raise wine grapes! 95.*



2017 River Quinn Santa Barbara County Chardonnay 14.3% alc., pH 3.49, 300 cases, \$25, screw cap. A special blend in honor of River Quinn Loring - the next generation of Loring. Wente clone. Barrel fermented and aged 10 months in 50% French oak (20% new) and 50% American oak (20% new). *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Initial aromas of lemon, buttery brioche, floral blossoms and flint are appealing. Discretely rich flavors of lemon, pineapple, white peach are alluring. Nicely balanced in an easy-to-please exuberant style. I would be happy to have this as a daily drinker. 90.*

2017 Loring Wine Company Sierra Mar Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay 14.3% alc., pH 3.42, 200 cases, \$44, screw cap. Robert Young selection. Barrel fermented and aged 10 months in 50% French oak (20% new) and 50% American oak (20% new). *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Reserved but appealing aromas of lemon oil, ocean air and a hint of flint. Alluring on the palate, with fresh flavors of lemon, cream, caramel and a hint of toast. The mouthfeel is polished, the acidity is uplifting, and the citrus-fueled finish is quenching. 93.*



2017 Loring Wine Company Kessler-Haak Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay 14.3% alc., pH 3.56, 200 cases, \$44, screw cap. Sweeney Canyon selection. Barrel fermented and aged 10 months in 50% French oak (20% new) and 50% American oak (20% new). *Aromas of lemon meringue, pineapple and seashore reveal themselves slowly in the glass. Delightful flavors of lemon-lime, pineapple, creme, saltine and a hint of gracious oak. Slightly viscous in the mouth, with expanding flavors that trail off through a vivid finish. A classy, sophisticated wine that confirms the opinion of many that the Sta. Rita Hills is the best region for Chardonnay in California. 94.*

Recent Tastings of California Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

Anaba Wines, Sonoma, CA

The latest offerings are terrific wines showing a gentle hand. The elegant style incorporating vibrant acidity shows the fingerprint of winemakers Ross Cobb (COBB Wines) and Katy Wilson (LaRue). The grapes are all hand-harvested and de-stemmed. A 4 to 6-day cold soak is followed by fermentation featuring gentle pump-overs and punch-downs. Visit www.anabawines.com, and grab some of these beauties for your cellar.

2016 Anaba Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.51, TA 0.61, 1,187 cases, \$42. A blend of select lots and clones from five vineyards. Clones are Pommard, 115, "828," 777 and 667. Harvest Brix 23.6°. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The showy nose offers aromas of red fruits, exotic spices and pipe smoke. Light to mid weight in an elegant style, featuring juicy red cherry flavor with the slightest confected tone. Silky in the mouth, with gentle tannins. A giving wine that is easy to embrace and made for delightful everyday drinking. 92.*

2016 Anaba Westlands Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., Ph 3.43, TA 0.62, 258 cases, \$60. This wine is meant to capture the essence of the West Sonoma Coast. Sourced from Jay Morris, O'Connor and Clary Ranch vineyards located in the West Sebastopol and West Petaluma regions. Clones 777, "828," Pommard, 667 and Calera. Harvest Brix 23.5°. 100% de-stemmed, aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Generous aromas of dark red and purple fruits, rose, mulch and burnt tobacco. The flavors echo the nose in a mid weight styled wine. A little more extraction and seriousness than the regular Sonoma Coast bottling with a little more mid palate intensity and a more flamboyant finish. Both the tannins and oak are perfectly integrated. 93.*



2016 Anaba Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.64, 121 cases, \$56.

This hilltop vineyard located at 700 feet elevation was planted in 1998 by vintner Steve MacRostie and partners. Clones 115 and 777. Harvest Brix 23.7° 100% de-stemmed, aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Teasing aromas of darker cherry, graham and spice. On entry, the wine wows you with mid weight flavors of black cherry and spice. The sumptuous texture caresses and the finish leaves behind endless echoes of aromatic goodness. The balance is impeccable, the wine has style and grace, and the overall experience is seductive. 94.*



2016 Anaba Sangiacomo-Roberts Road Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.62, 108 cases, \$56. Vineyard planted in 1999. Half the day, the vineyard is shrouded in fog and also affected by coastal breezes. The block for this bottling is in the flat land at the base of Sonoma Mountain and features well-drained, silty gravel soils. 100% de-stemmed, aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of blueberry, dark cherry, ash and new leather draw you into the glass. The dark red fruit core delivers purity and is framed by gentle tannins. The plush texture attracts and the finish offers racy cherry fruit. The wine takes on more intensity and character over time in the glass. 92,*

2016 Anaba Soberanes Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.44, TA 0.61, 241 cases, \$56. Vineyard is owned and farmed by the Pisoni and Francioni families. Pisoni "clone." Harvest Brix 24.2°. 100% de-stemmed, aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose offers competition between aromas of maraschino cherry, rose and dried herbs and oak-driven ash and vanilla. Light to mid weight in style, offering earth-toned fruit flavors of black cherry and boysenberry. A pretty wine with a polished mouthfeel, a dash of toasty oak, and some length on the sweet boysenberry finish. 90.*

2016 Anaba Dutton Ranch Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 13.0% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.67, 278 cases, \$42. Grapes come from the Mills Station Vineyard and Shop Block Vineyard in the Green Valley of the Russian River Valley AVA lying within the Sonoma Coast AVA. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented, 90% malolactic fermentation, aged 17 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 27% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Delicate aromas of lemon, yellow apple and honeydew melon. Rich and creamy on the palate, and loaded with pineapple, honey, blond caramel and brioche flavors, with nicely integrated acidity woven into the fabric of the wine. Nothing to specifically criticize, but just doesn't excite me.* **89.**

2016 Anaba J McK Estate Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay 13.9% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.67, 193 cases, \$42. Wente clone. Harvest Brix 23.5°. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented with 65% malolactic fermentation, and aged 17 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 38% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The aromas of lemon, pineapple and yellow stone fruits build in intensity over time in the glass. Silky and vibrant on the palate, with appealing flavors of citrus fruits, blond caramel and butterscotch. An upbeat, energetic wine that aims to please.* **92.**

Blagden (Versatile Vines, LLC), Healdsburg, CA

I first met winemaker Catherine Blagden a few years ago when she was working with Greg La Follette. She started the small Blagden label in 2006, featuring Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Sonoma Coast, and sometimes Cabernet Sauvignon. She has been living part of the year in London for the past seven years but now is back in California and "re-launching" her label, crafting wines at Grapewagon custom crush in Healdsburg. She still has some stock of Blagden wines dating back to 2012. A second label, Ayiana, was started with the 2015 vintage and consists of special bottlings and blends. Typically, the wines are held back a couple of years before release.

Catherine has an impressive resume. She has an MA in Health Psychology from Stanford University and an MS in Viticulture and Enology from UC Davis. She formed a consulting practice in 2002 with Greg LaFollette and together they worked on many small artisan Pinot Noir labels including Tandem, Dunah, Londer, Lookout Ridge, Luna, Sapphire Hill, and Soliste. In 2005, she started the Soliste label while concurrently working at Gallo of Sonoma. She also spent a harvest at Domaine Dujac in Burgundy.



The winery's website is currently under development. Join the mailing list at www.blagdenwines.com and for offerings contact info@blagdenwines.com.

2012 Blagden Sangiacomo - Roberts Road Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.60, 220 cases, \$48. Released March 2017. Clones 115, Swan and 777. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native fermentation in open-top fermenters, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Despite being several years old, this wine benefits from time and was more appealing when tasted a day after opening. Aromas of black cherry, spice and barrique lead to a light to mid weight styled wine featuring black cherry and blueberry fruit flavors. Silky, with good t n'a balance, and elegant composure. There is more oak imprint than I prefer.* **90.**

2013 Blagden Sangiacomo - Roberts Road Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.50, 200 cases, \$58. Released March 2018. Winner of 11th Annual International Women's Winemaking Competition. Clones 115, Swan and 777. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native fermentation in open-top fermenters, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 38% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of black cherry, floral perfume and a hint of vanilla. Expansive flavors of black raspberry and boysenberry are framed by sleek tannins creating a comforting mouthfeel. More ripeness and extraction in this vintage compared to the 2012 bottling. There is a light imprint of toasty oak.* **91.**

2015 Blagden Sangiacomo - Roberts Road Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.50, 125 cases, \$48. Release March 2019. Clones 115, Swan and 777. 100% de-stemmed, native fermentation in open-top fermenters after a 5-day cold soak, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of crushed dark red and black berries along with a bit of toasty oak soar from the glass. Mid weight plus in style with plenty of black fruit stuffing. The wine carries the weight of fruit and alcohol well. Plush and polished on the palate, with noticeable length to the finish.* **92.**

2016 Blagden Sangiacomo-Roberts Road Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$Pre-release. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of dark red and black fruits with an appealing freshness. Mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, exotic spices, and a dusting of toasty oak presented in a wholesome and coordinated fashion. Nuances of loam and floral perfume add interest. Beautifully balanced, with integrated tannins, and a long finish replete with black cherry goodness.* **93.**



2016 Blagden Placida Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$pre-release. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of blackberry, blueberry-pomegranate and hints of floral goodness and oak. The mid weight core of botanical-infused black cherry fruit has welcome juiciness. Elegantly composed, with a suave texture and a strikingly long black cherry infused finish.* **92.**



2015 Ayiana Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.60, 175 cases, \$38. Release March 2019. Label designed in honor of Mom Cynthia H. Grace who succumbed to lung cancer in 2012 and loved hummingbirds. 100% de-stemmed, native fermentation in open-top fermenters after a 5-day cold soak, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Subdued, but pleasant aromas of black cherry and black raspberry with overtones of aged barrique. Bold in a mid weight plus style, with flavors that echo the aromas. Initially a bit reserved and rustic, reaching new heights with time in the glass. A dash of toasty oak is the background and a bit of tannin shows up on the finish. More enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle showing better tannin and oak integration.* **92.**

Brooks Note Winery, Novato, CA

Garry Brooks offers small-lot Pinot Noirs annually from vineyards in Marin County and Yorkville Highlands. In 2004, he left the world of technology and obtained a degree in Viticulture and Enology from UC Davis. His work experience includes stints at Ravenswood, Acacia, Kosta-Browne and Dutton-Goldfield. In 2011, Garry and his

spouse, Joanne, decided to start their own commercial brand after working harvests for others since 2004 and producing many great garage wines for friends and family,

The wines are available on the website at www.brooks-note-winery.myshopify.com. Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and a Rosé are also offered.



2016 Brooks Note Marin County Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.63, 200 cases, \$36. A blend of grapes from Azaya Ranch (clones are Wädenswil 2A, 115, 667 and "828.") and Chileno Valley Vineyard (Pommard and "828."). 10% whole cluster. 3-day cold soak, native yeast fermentation, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 33% new, 33% once-filled and 33% neutral. Filtered and bottled in February 2017. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is highly rewarding, featuring deep aromas of cherry, rose petal and baking spice. Regal and silky in the mouth, with a core of dark chocolate covered black cherry flavor enhanced with an earthy tone. Seamless, with a pleasing cherry-driven finish. 93.*



2016 Brooks Note Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.65, 250 cases, \$44. Rochioli selection and Wädenswil 2A clone from the lower, eastern block planted in 1992 and a Romaneé-Conti selection from the higher, western block. 10% whole cluster. 3-day cold soak, native yeast fermentation. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 33% new, 66% neutral. Bottled in March 2017. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of black cherry, raspberry, spice cabinet and a hint of toasty oak. Fresh and invigorating in the mouth, with a charge of ripe cherry and raspberry fruit with a hint of cola. The tannic backbone is finely tuned and the finish hangs on for what seems like at least 30 seconds. A real charmer. You should stock up on this one at this price. 95.*



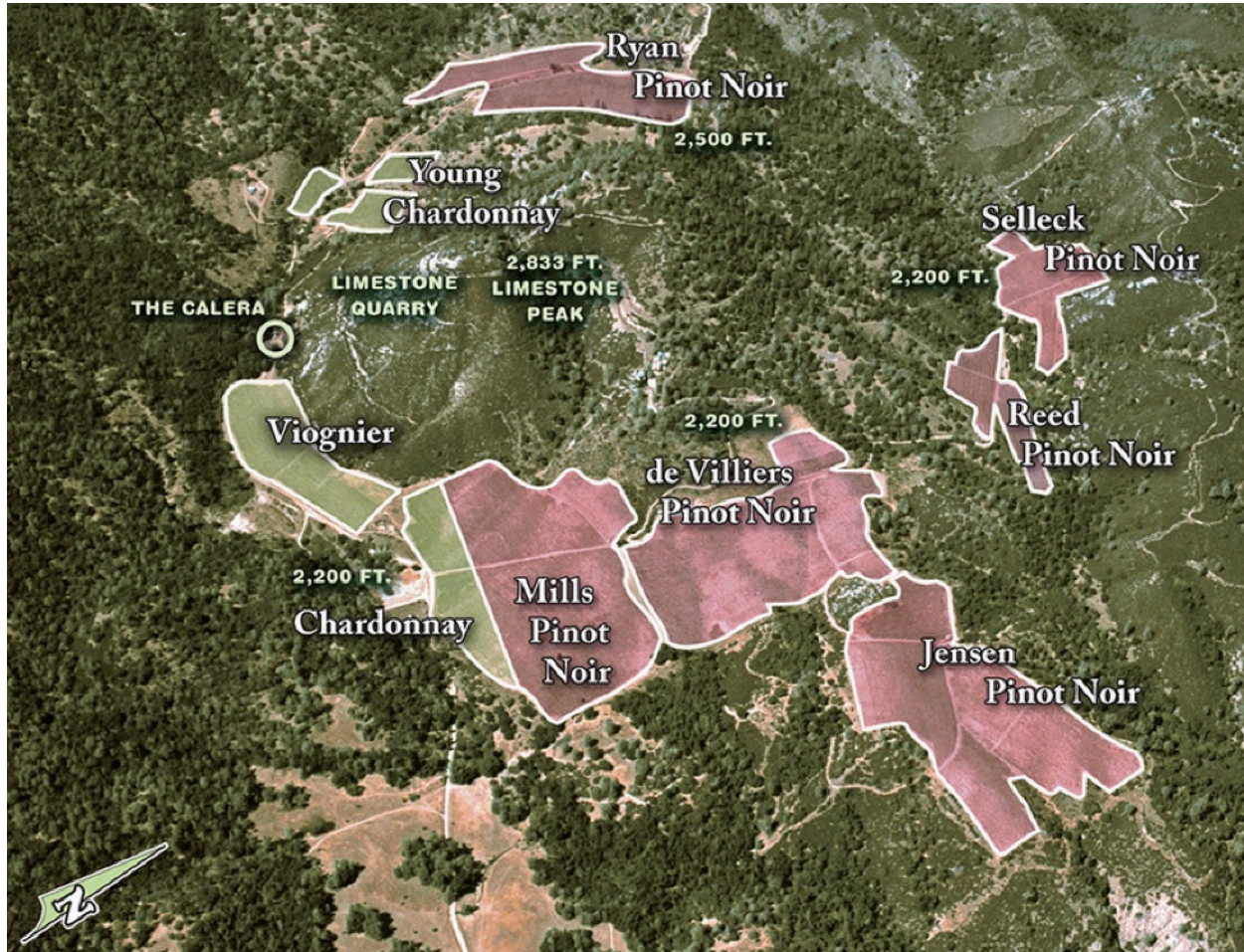
Calera Wine Company, Hollister, CA

Calera's Central Coast Pinot Noir and Chardonnay have been produced since the mid-1980s and have introduced generations of wine lovers to the quality and style of Calera wines. These wines, which represent terrific value, are widely distributed and readily available in the retail marketplace. The estate vineyards on Mt. Harlan are used exclusively for the winery's vineyard-designate wines that are the crown jewel of the Calera portfolio. These wines are very limited in production and sold to a mailing list and on the winery's website at

www.CaleraWine.com. Although the winery has been sold to Duckhorn, long-time winemaker Mike Waller remains on the job and consistency has been preserved.

Calera's Mt. Harlan vineyards are located in the Gavilan Mountains 25 miles east of the Monterey Bay. The site was chosen for its limestone soils and ideal climate. At an average elevation of 2,200 feet, it is among the highest and coolest vineyard sites in California.

The vineyard-designated Pinot Noir wines reviewed here show impeccable balance and the proper tannic structure for aging.



Calera has released a 2015 Muns Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir (\$48) and a 2016 Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$48), new vineyard-designates for this winery.

2016 Calera Central Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.60, 14,720 cases, \$30. Grapes for this wine are sourced from some of the finest vineyards on the Central Coast including Solomon Hills, Sierra Madre, Bien Nacido, Garys', Laetitia and Pedregal vineyards. Average harvest Brix 24.5°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 10% new and 90% neutral. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Enchanting aromas of dusty cherry, violets and rose petal initially, but with time in the glass, oak takes over and char aroma appears. Mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, purple berry and cola with an overcoat of oak. Plenty of well-ripened fruit stuffing that carries through the finish, but the aggressive oak imprint detracts. 87.*

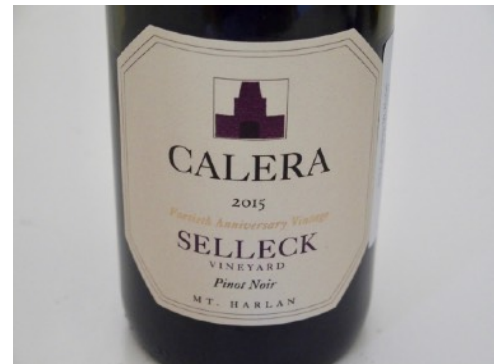


2016 Calera Central Coast Chardonnay 14.4% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.67, 13,416 cases, \$25. Sourced from eight of the Central Coast's finest vineyards including Sierra Madre, Bien Nacido, Lone Oak, Laetitia, Talley and Pedregal. Average harvest Brix 24.5°. Barrel fermented, native yeasts, 100% malolactic fermentation. Aged 10 months without racking in French oak barrels, 10% new, 90% neutral. *Moderate golden yellow color and clear in the glass. Well-appointed scents of lemon, lemongrass, yellow applesauce and melon. Slightly viscous in the mouth with pleasing flavors of lemon, yellow apple and biscuit. Streamlined, with energetic acidity and oak way in the background. 90.*

2015 Calera Ryan Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.63, 397 cases, \$60. Produced from relatively young vines planted in 1998 and 2001. At 2,500 feet, ryan is the highest vineyard on Mt. Harlan. Average harvest Brix 24.0°. Yields in 2015 0.45 tons per acre. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 10% second and 60% neutral. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Highly nuanced nose offering aromas of blackberry, blackest cherry, pomegranate, fertile earth, bramble and toasty oak. A flood of enthusiastic boysenberry and blackberry fruit flavors saturate the palate. A hint of spice and toast add interest. The fruit is supported by very fine-grain tannins and the wine finishes long, dry and lip-smacking.* **92.**

2015 Calera Mills Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.66, 309 cases, \$70. Vines planted on their own roots in 1984 and 1998. Average harvest Brix 24.0°. Yield in 2015 0.32 tons per acre. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 10% second, 60% neutral. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Highly appealing aromas of blueberry-pomegranate, black cherry, spice, fertile topsoil and roasted coffee beans. Delicious core of black cherry, blackberry and pomegranate fruits are accented with spice and tobacco oak. Impressive harmony and grace with reigned-in tannins. The finish is exceptionally long.* **93.**

2015 Calera Selleck Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.72, 125 cases, \$95. Vines planted in 1975 on a tiny 4.8-acre vineyard. Yield in 2015 0.35 tons per acre. Average harvest Brix 24.0°. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 10% second, 60% neutral. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. This wine displays the ripest fruit profile in the 2015 lineup tasted, featuring aromas and flavors of black raspberry, black cherry and blackberry. The fruit flavors are really delightful although a little too ripe for me to fully embrace. The wine has impeccable harmony, with very fine-grain tannins, an appealing earthiness, a compliment of underlying oak, and a big, fruit-laden finish.* **93**



Dutton-Goldfield, Sebastopol, CA

This winery is one of the first to have the Sonoma County Certified Sustainable logo on the labels starting with the 2017 Dutton Ranch wines reviewed here. This logo certifies that the vineyards from which the winery sources grapes are certified under the Sonoma Winegrowers program's three categories of assessment: (1) being socially responsible in how the winery works with their employees, neighbors and community, (2) being environmentally conscientious with farming and winery practices, and (3) managing business operations to ensure economic viability and long-term endurance. Visit www.duttongoldfield.com.

2017 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.56, \$45. Dutton Ranch farms over 80 unique vineyards located in the cooler areas of the Russian River Valley, primarily in the Green Valley sub-appellation. This wine is a blend of grapes from 12 of these Sonoma County Certified Sustainable vineyard. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, 14-20 days on the skins, and aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose arrives slowly to reveal attractive aromas of cherry liquor, black raspberry, fertile earth and savory herbs. Mid weight plus in style, with a core of earth-toned cherry and blackberry fruits. Highly approachable, with redeeming balance and some finishing length.* **90.**



2017 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.5% alc., pH 3.44, TA 0.59, \$39. Sourced from 8 vineyards, primarily located in the cool Green Valley of Russian River Valley. All vineyards are Sonoma County Certified Sustainable. Barrel fermented with a combination of indigenous and inoculated yeast strains. Full malolactic fermentation. Lees are stirred twice monthly through the winter. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Lovely aromas of lemon, pineapple, fresh yellow apple and ripe pear. Vigorous flavors of citrus, pear and kiwi follow in a clean, bright style of wine with an upbeat personality.* **91.**

En Garde Winery, Glen Ellen, CA

Winemaker Csaba Szakal, a fourth generation winemaker from Hungary, left his profession as a computer programmer to start En Garde Winery in 2007. He crafts multiple varietals from sourced grapes including Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs. Future releases include Pinot Noir wines from Roma's Vineyard in the Anderson Valley, Noble Family vineyard in the Petaluma Gap, and a Sonoma Coast (Los Carneros) vineyard. Csaba told me, "As you can see, I am taking this Pinot thing more and more seriously as time goes on."



For Pinot Noir, the grapes are de-stemmed but additions of whole clusters are not uncommon. After a cold soak, native yeasts kick off fermentation in small open-top tanks. Naturally occurring yeasts strains selected from around the world are introduced to create complexity and to ensure a controlled fermentation. Punch downs of the cap are by hand. The wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered after 17 months of barrel aging. Csaba's wife, Sandy, collaborates with him to determine the final blend for each wine.

I have reviewed Csaba's excellent Pinot Noir wines since the 2010 vintage.

The winery's stylish tasting room is open daily on Sonoma Highway in Kenwood. Visit www.engardewinery.com. The three wines reviewed here will be released in a month or two as part of the winery's spring release.



2016 En Garde Starkey's Hill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 138 cases, \$60. 30+ year-old vines including clones 23, Pommard and "828." Harvest Brix 24.8°-25.6°. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with upbeat aromas of black cherry, baking spices and nutty oak. A deeply flavored black cherry core brings the taste buds to attention in this middleweight styled wine. A real cherry delight with impeccable oak integration, silky tannins and a wondrous finish. This wine took two days after opening to really reach its peak, when my notes say "great!"* **94.**



2016 En Garde Pleasant Hill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 98 cases, \$60. Vineyard is located in Sebastopol near Starkey's Hill. 25+ year-old vines including clones 115, 667, and Pommard. 100% clone 115 in this wine. Harvest Brix 24.5°. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass.*

The nose is spectacular, offering hi-tone aromas of dark cherry, dark red berry, spice and rose petal. Delicious black raspberry, black cherry, spice and cola flavors in a mid weight plus style. Impressive energy and juiciness with a light dash of oak and a profound finish. This ephemeral wine is more giving upon opening than the Starkey's Hill. 94.



2016 En Garde Russian River Valley Reserve Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 121 cases, \$80. Clones "828," 23 and Pommard. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Loamy aromas join an array of dark fruits on the nose. The mid weight flavors of dark red and black cherry satisfy, yet the wine is a bit rustic and brooding initially. The alcohol is well integrated and the finest grain tannins provide textural interest as well as support for longevity. The finish is the longest of the three 2016 En Garde Pinots tasted. More giving with lively aromatics but with noticeable oak input when re-tasted two days after opening. This is a wine to put away in your cellar for a few years while you drink the more charming Pleasant Hill bottling. 93.*

FEL Wines, Napa, CA

FEL Wines was founded in 2014 by vintner Cliff Lede to produce AVA-designated and vineyard-designated Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris from the Anderson Valley. The label is named as a tribute to Lede's mother, Florence Elsie Lede, who first introduced him to wine. Winemaker Ryan Hodgins has been featured in the pages of the *PinotFile* in the past and admired for his skills after over a decade of experience.

Visit www.felwines.com. Tasting is available at the Cliff Lede Vineyards Tasting Room in Yountville, open daily.

2016 FEL Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$65. Limited whole cluster inclusion. Aged in French oak barrels, 20% new, for 16 months. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Intriguing aromas of black cherry and exotic spices lead to a middleweight styled wine with flavors of black cherry, mushroom and toast. Easy to like, with suede tannins and a succulent, fruit-filled finish. Impeccably balanced for long-term enjoyment. 93.*



2017 FEL Anderson Valley Chardonnay 13.7% alc., \$32. Sourced from Savoy and Ferrington vineyards. Very limited malolactic fermentation. Aged on the lees, without stirring, for 10 months in neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate golden yellow color and clear in the glass. Scents of lemon-lime, lemongrass, green apple and jasmine. An acid driven style with flavors of lemon-lime and green apple. Nervy with a zesty but slightly bitter finish. I have had a number of un-oaked Chardonnays that I preferred in comparison. 89.*

La Pitchoune Winery, Santa Rosa, CA

A boutique producer of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from select Sonoma County vineyards. Tracy Nielsen and Peter Joachim Nielsen were inspired by a small family property in the south of France named "la pitchoune" or "the little one." The name speaks to small production, small lots and the idea that the winery's small size is its greatest asset. The winemaker is Andrew Berge, with Tracy assisting.

The small production is sold through a mailing list, a wine club and the website store at www.lapitchounewinery.com. Tasting is available by reservation.

Andrew related to me his goals. "Because I am attempting to produce distinct, unapologetic wines that have the potential to age, some reduction is expected when the wines are young and the wines will always lean more on savory flavors and less on fruit. The savory flavors become oxidized with age and can become stewy,

cooked and unpleasant while the savory flavors evolve into other desirable savory flavors. I am trying to produce wines that may challenge peoples' expectations."

I still found the Pinot Noirs reviewed here from the 2015 vintage full of desirable fruit flavors. The Chardonnays do show reductive flinty and matchstick aromas upon opening that blow off as the wine is exposed to oxygen. When I tasted the wines from previously opened and re-corked bottles the following day, the wines were pristine, with no reductive character I suggest decanting the Chardonnays before you to plan to drink them.

2015 La Pitchoune Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.58, 298 cases, \$48. Sourced from English Hill, Holder and Morris vineyards. Dijon clones 115, 667, 777 and "838." Average harvest Brix 24.3°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, 25% once used, and 50% four years or older. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of purple grapes, boysenberry and underbrush lead off. Dense and bold in a fruit-driven mid weight plus style, with waves of dark red and purple fruits greeting the palate. A botanical thread plies the background. Nicely composed with balanced tannins and some finishing purpose. 90.*

2015 La Pitchoune Holder Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.58, 48 cases, \$68. Vineyard is a 1.25-acre family operated site. Dijon clones 115 and 667. Harvest Brix 24.3° and 24.6°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, 25% once used and 50% four years or older. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of dark berries, grape must and nutty oak develop more appeal over time in the glass. The mid weight plus purple and black berry fruits flood the mouth with goodness. Subtle oak spice adds interest. The svelte tannins make for gracious drinking, and the bold and very long finish puts this wine in an upper category. 93.*



2015 La Pitchoune English Hill Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.8% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.59, 48 cases, \$68. Dijon 115, 667 and a Vosne-Romanée selection. Harvest Brix 23.0° and 23.4°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, 25% once used and 50% four years or older. (This vineyard is located at the northern end of the Petaluma Gap and is always windy so the skins are super thick resulting in higher phenolic levels. The higher phenolic levels can stress the yeast and this can cause a smokey character in the wine. The Vosne-Romanée selection also contributes to that character. The vineyard was also a former cattle pasture) *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of red berry jam, tobacco and smoke. The wine is blessed with plenty of cherry and cranberry fruit in a mid weight style, but not as exuberant as the Holder bottling. There is a noticeable smoky component to the flavor profile. The wine was more amendable when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, but I suspect this wine needs a few years in the cellar. Definitely a terroir-driven wine. 91.*

2015 La Pitchoune Van der Kamp Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.55, 48 cases, \$58. Dijon clones 777, "828," and a La Tache selection. Harvest Brix 22.0° and 25.5°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, 25% once used and 50% more than three years old. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of purple berry and seasoned oak. Sleek and silky on the palate, with vigorous flavors of blackberry and blueberry-pomegranate that persist through a lengthy finish. There is a savory, earthy component to the flavor profile as well. This wine has the most tannins of the four 2015 Pinot Noirs tasted, but they are not aggressive and should serve this wine well as far as age ability. 92.*

2015 La Pitchoune Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.47, TA 0.59, 185 cases, \$48. Sourced from Pratt, Chenoweth and Dutton Sullivan vineyards. Selections of Wente, Wente-Hyde, Robert Young and Mt. Eden. Harvest Brix 23.6°-23.9°. Barrel fermented and aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 10% new, 90% twice used or older. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate golden yellow color with slight cloudiness (unfiltered) in the glass. Aromas of lemon tart, peach, cold steel, old wood and a hint of flint initially. A cozy, easy to like wine, with ripe flavors of Honeycrisp apple, white peach, lemon curd, honey and a subtle bit of matchstick in the background initially. Slightly viscous in texture, with a citrus-driven finish. Considerably more enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle when the aromas of citrus, white peach and slate were singing and all evidence of reduction had disappeared. 91.*

2015 La Pitchoune Pratt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 13.9% alc., pH 3.41, TA 0.61, 52 cases, \$68. Robert Young and Mt Eden clones. Harvest Brix 23.7°. Barrel fermented, aged 16 months in French oak

barrels, 33% new and 67% four years old. *Moderate golden yellow color with slight cloudiness (unfiltered) in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of oak-kissed lemon and pear. Very polished in the mouth with good fullness featuring flavors of lemon, pineapple and complimentary toasty oak. The wine finishes softly with a grapefruit-flavored flourish. Much more appealing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 93.*

2015 La Pitchoune Chenoweth Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 13.9% alc., pH 3.39, TA 0.61, 48 cases, \$88. Wente-Hyde selection. Harvest Brix 24.0°. Barrel fermented and aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 50% new and 50% four years old. *Moderate golden yellow color with slight cloudiness (unfiltered) in the glass. Noticeable flinty, stinky aromas upon opening, decreasing over time in the glass. Fruit aromas and flavors of lemon, pineapple and yellow grapefruit with a hint of brioche, in a mildly austere but sophisticated style. Creamy in texture, with a satisfying lemony finish. Considerably more likable when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle when all reductive aromas had resolved. 92.*

Sea Smoke, Lompoc, CA

Sea Smoke's Estate Vineyard was planted in 1999 in the Sta. Rita Hills. What makes the site unique is that it is located in one of the only east-west coastal mountain ranges in the United States. Because of this, a layer of marine fog known as "sea smoke," travels up the Santa Ynez River canyon each evening cooling the vines. This cooling influence allows flavors and tannins to slowly and fully mature, and also preserves the bright acidity typical of the Pinot Noirs from this region.

The 'Ten' bottling is a blend of all ten clones planted at the organic and biodynamic-certified Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard. Winemaker Don Schroeder has been at Sea Smoke for many years and this has allowed him to understand the nuances of this great winegrowing site. He has learned how to do just enough as a winemaker to let what makes the vineyard so exceptional to shine through without obscuring the beauty of the site. Over the past fifteen vintages, 'Ten' has become a more complex and compelling wine as a result.



2016 Sea Smoke 'Ten' Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.60, \$82.

100% de-stemmed after hand harvesting. After a 5-day cold soak, inoculated with cultured yeasts to begin fermentation. Manual punch downs with a total maceration time of 16 to 28 days. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Alluring aromas of purple berries, spice and a shade of oak. Immediately open and giving in a mid weight plus style, featuring flavors of boysenberry and blackberry with a deft hint of oak. Expansive in the mouth with a cohesive tannic backbone and a very long and intensely fruity finish. Very polished, with fruit that offers a really charming spark of pleasure. Even better when tasted several hours later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. The balance in this wine predicts favorable age ability. A perfect accompaniment would be a grilled prime New York steak. 96.*



Waits Mast Family Cellars, San Francisco, CA

I have been reviewing the Pinot Noir wines of Brian and Jennifer Waits since their first vintage in 2007. Vineyard sources have varied through the years, but now all fruit comes from Mendocino County vineyards. The winemaker is Shalini Sekhar, who has crafted Pinot Noir for Roar, Furthermore and Neely and several other small brands. In 2015, she was awarded Winemaker of the Year at the San Francisco International Wine Competition for her work with Furthermore Pinot Noir. The wines are sold primarily through a mailing list at www.waitsmast.com.

2015 Waits-Mast Oppenlander Vineyard Mendocino County Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., 118 cases, \$45. Released November 2018. Vineyard is located outside the town of Comptche, 8.5 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Consistently cool temperatures pervade the growing season and harvest is late. Clones 115 and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermentation, aged 16 months in a mix of once-used, twice-used and neutral French oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Light garnet color in the glass. Elegantly styled,*

with aromas of cherry, strawberry, tobacco leaf and toast. Discreet in weight, with refreshing flavors of cherry, raspberry and allspice. Good vibrancy, with a suave mouthfeel and some finishing grace and purpose. 90.

2015 Waits-Mast Mariah Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 75 cases, \$42. Released November 2018. Vineyard is located at 2,400 feet elevation. Dry-farmed. Clones 667 and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed, proprietary yeast fermentation, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Primarily oak-driven toast and char aromas. Difficult to coax any fruit aromas from the glass. Mid weight plus in concentration, with well-ripened flavors of purple and black berries that fill the mid palate. Sleek in texture with balance tannins and a fruit-driven, slightly sweet finish.. Tasted twice with consistent results. 88.*

2015 Waits-Mast Wentzel Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., 90 cases, \$47. Released November 2018. The 10-acre vineyard near Philo is organically farmed. Dijon clones 114, 115, 667 and 777. 100% de-stemmed, proprietary yeast fermentation, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of boysenberry pie and underbrush lead to light to mid weight flavors of boysenberry and blackberry with a bit of nutty oak in the background. The fruit is supported by mild, ruddy tannins. The wine has a somewhat shallow finish and lacks a bit of stuffing, but overall is a pleasant drink. 89.*

2016 Waits-Mast Nash Mill Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$Pre-release. Vineyard is located at the cool northern end of Anderson Valley. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose balances aromas of cherry, fertile earth and oak. Tasty mid weight flavors of black cherry and raspberry are framed by gracious tannins. Complimentary oak highlights ply the background. The wine has an appealingly polished texture. The fruit always stands out from this vineyard. 92.*



Pinot Briefs

Lede Family Wines Buys Carneros Vineyard Lede Family Wines, which owns the Anderson Valley Pinot Noir and Chardonnay producer, FEL, has purchased an 120-acre site with 86 planted acres off Highway 12 near the Napa-Sonoma county line in Carneros. Lede Family Wines' founder Cliff Lede plans to redevelop the vineyard by 2020. He feels it is essential to control the winery's grape supply by owning estate vineyards. Lede Family Vineyards has owned Savoy Vineyard since 2011.

Oregon Wine Trail 60 Oregon wineries from the Willamette Valley, Southern Oregon and Columbia Gorge AVAs will pour in New York City on May 6, 2019, at The Altman Building. Visit www.oregonwine.org/trail/nyc/ for details and early bird tickets.

Wander + Ivy Single-Serving Wine This label, launched in Colorado, currently offers four wines: Rosé, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and a red blend in 6.3 ounce bottles - a little more than a standard glass of wine. the bottle is priced at about \$6.99. The brand uses grapes from the Willamette Valley for the Pinot Noir.



Pioneering Woman Winemaker Mary Ann Graff Passed Away Graf was hired as the winemaker for Simi Winery in Healdsburg in 1973. She launched and ran the laboratory known as Vinquiry that provided testing services to wineries. She was the first woman to graduate from UC Davis with a degree in Fermentation Sciences.

Update on Smoke Taint Research winebusiness.com quoted Thomas Collins, assistant professor at Washington State University Wine Science Center, speaking at the recent Sonoma County Grape Day, as saying that smoke exposure can cause smoke taint both pre- and post-veraison. Previously, it was believed that wine grapes were most susceptible to smoke after veraison. Smoke composition will vary depending on the plants that are being burned and this will in-turn affect wine aromas differently.

Airline Routes Added to Santa Rosa American Airlines has announced expanded service to Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport beginning June 2019 and Los Angeles International Airport starting May 2019. Alaska Airlines already flies to Santa Rosa from Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, Orange County and San Diego. Sun Country Airlines serves Santa Rosa from Las Vegas and Minneapolis and United Airlines services Santa Rosa from Denver and San Francisco.

New International Directory of Wineries “Places” is a new international directory of wineries launched by *My Wine Society* (exclusively in-app). Places can be used to discover new wineries, plan a visit, check operating hours, view photos, contact a winery or schedule a tasting. There are hundreds of wineries on the platform already and there are projected to be 160,000 uses globally in 2019 and 500,000 users by 2020. Wineries pay \$19.95 a month plus to become verified on Places. Places will be launched February 2019. For more information, visit www.mywinesociety.com/places/.

The Vinum Project Launches Vinum Collection founder Vanessa Price and Photographer Michelle McSwain have launched the Vinum Project Print Collection aimed at both wine and art lovers. The collection’s imagery is a humorous and vibrant take on the fusion of today’s wine lifestyle and contemporary art. These fine art pieces range from \$400-\$3,000 and prints range from \$65-\$125, For information and to view images, visit the online store at www.vinumco.com/store.



Oregon Solidarity Project Four Oregon wineries are collaborating to create three wines from 2,000 tons of Rogue Valley grapes rejected by California vintner Joseph J. Wagner who claimed the grapes were tainted from wildfires. Testing has not shown any adverse effect on the wine grapes. The four wineries are King Estate, Silvan Ridge, Willamette Valley Vineyards and Eyrie Vineyards. A Pinot Noir Rosé will be released March 1, a Chardonnay May 1 and a Pinot Noir August 1. The wines will be distributed in Oregon and Washington.

McMinnville Wine & Food Classic - SIP! This 3-day annual event, to be held March 8-10, 2019, is dedicated to fundraising for children’s education at St. James School in McMinnville. This year features an enhanced panel of Wine Competition judges, more high profile wineries and new awards categories. About 160 Oregonian food, wine and art vendors will participate including 75 wineries such as Archery Summit, Beaux Frères, Torii Mor, Lenné Estate, Yamhill Valley Vineyards and Youngberg Hill. Taking top honors in the formal Wine Competition was Cardwell Hill Cellars, which claimed Best of Show, Best Red, Best Pinot Noir and Double Gold for their 2014 Estate Dijon Blocks Pinot Noir. This 26th-anniversary event is hosted in the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum. For more information, places to stay and tickets, visit www.macclassic.org.

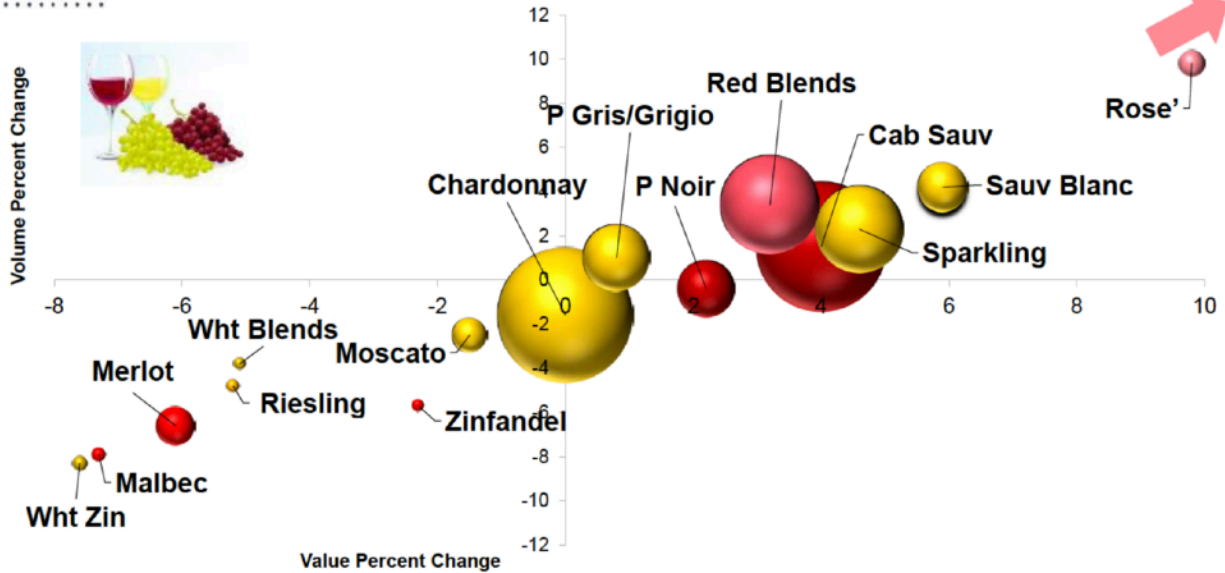
Price Variation in Pinot Noir Linfield College students presented a Willamette Valley Pinot pricing study in the Oregon Wine Press: www.owp.com. The investigators attempted to determine what attributes explain variations in the price of Willamette Valley Pinot Noir. They compiled information from 63 Willamette Valley wineries as well as information on wine review and wholesale websites. They tested eight attributes

against the wine prices. They found that the inclusion of a LIVE certification increased wine prices by 27.8 percent, each additional percent increase in the ABV increased wine prices by 15 percent, and ratings associated with the bottle of wine predicted that with each additional score point in rating, the price increased by 12.8 percent.

Off-Premises Sales by Varietal

Rose', SB, CS, Red Blends, Sparkling Lead

nielsen Total U.S. Off Premise



Source: Nielsen Total U.S. All Outlets (xAOC + Liquor Plus + Conv + Military); 52 w/e 12-29-2018 (Bubble = Annual \$ Size); Table Wine (Sparkling thru 12-1-2018)

Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival The 22nd Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival, sponsored by the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association, will be held May 17-19. Technical Conference with Lunch and Casual Evening BBQ on Friday, May 17, Grand Tasting and Winemaker Dinners and Concert on Saturday, May 18, and Winery Open Houses in Anderson Valley on Sunday, May 19. Unique on-site accommodations available at Camp Navarro. For more information and tickets, visit www.avwines.com.



Drizly Delivers Wine The wine deliver app Drizly has a new partnership with BevMo! in California offering one-hour delivery service of booze and wine from 45 stores located throughout the state. Visit



Low & Zero-Alcohol Wine is YUK

An article in *Meininger's Wine Business International* by Mark Meek reports that drinks market analyst IWSR forecasted increased demand for low or zero-alcohol wines of almost 18% in the U.S., 7% in the U.K., 4% in Germany and 20% in Spain. The rise in the number of people who avoid alcohol as a lifestyle choice, especially among Millennials, is fueling an interest in low-alcohol drinks, particularly in Europe.

Many have switched to beer because of its lower alcohol content. Heineken reported this week that it had more sales in more than a decade in 2018, and this was partly due to demand for alcohol-free Heineken 0.0.

The problem with low or zero-alcohol wines is that they lack flavor and interest. After water, alcohol is the most significant portion of wine. It supplies calories, stimulates the appetite, offers gustatory pleasure, and leads to relaxation, more social interaction and procreation. Alcohol contributes body, texture, intensity and sweetness that makes fruit in wine seem fuller and broader. Since alcohol is a solvent, it can extract more flavor out of skins, pips and oak barrels during vinification.

Alcohol can also confer health benefits on drinkers, giving those who consume it in moderation and regularly with meals as part of a healthy lifestyle, a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and loss of cognitive function and increased longevity. It was Paracelsus, a German physician in the Middle Ages, considered the father of modern pharmacology, who invented the word alcohol and stressed its tonic value. The claims that low-alcohol wine is "healthier," is only founded on the premise that you can drink more of it with less alcohol intake.

I have tasted a few low-alcohol wines and they are plain bad. Personally, I feel that taking alcohol out of wine removes its heart and soul. Wine with low or zero alcohol becomes a manufactured beverage lacking all of the nuances and attributes that make wine so pleasurable. It is basically grape juice. I say YUK! instead of Cheers!