

PinotFile[©]

Castle Rock Winery Rocks

This winery in Napa is not to be confused with the boutique winery in New Zealand called Castlerock, or the city of Castlerock on the North Derry coast of Northern Ireland or the historic Castlerock Winery of the 1880's on Mt Veeder. The name is spelled with two words. Also, the owner, Greg Popovich, is not the same Greg that owns the San Antonio Spurs. Other than that, not a lot is known about this hugely successful winery.

Owner Greg Popovich has been in the wine business over 20 years. The consulting winemaker is August "Joe" Briggs who is known for his own August Briggs Pinot Noirs. There is no elaborate winemaking facility, tasting room, or hospitality center. They use an unnamed Napa Valley Winery facility to make their wines which also include a Merlot and Zin. Grapes are accessed from unnamed sources in Napa, Sonoma, and the Central Coast for the Pinot Noirs.

Astonishingly, the winery sold more than 50,000 cases of wine in 2001, and have exceeded 30,000 cases in the first quarter of 2003. They project future totals of more than 65,000 cases a year. All of their wines sell for less than \$12.

Well supposedly it is difficult to do a fussy, yield-sensitive grape like Pinot cheaply. But they have figured it out. Over the last 3 years they have put out five different Pinot Noirs selling in the \$8-10 range and they have all been amazingly good for the money. Because of the glut of Pinot juice, they are negotiating for excellent juice, blending it and assembling an excellent product. Because they have no winery their overhead is minimal. They don't use a fancy Burgundy bottle or an etched label, but they do use a nice cork.

2002 Castle Rock Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$8 The current Pinot Noir release is made from Russian River Valley and Carneros grapes. The wine spent nine months in French oak barrels. The label states the wine is produced in very small quantities but the sales figures would dispute this claim. Regardless, this is sexy Pinot juice. Delicate, medium bodied with sweet vanilla oak overtones, notes of sweet strawberries and hints of violets. I defy you to find another Pinot Noir in the world that is this good for \$8. This is the working man's everyday Pinot of choice. Like Martha Stewart's beautiful house of S&M— pretty violets, sweet black tea, scrumptious fruits, and some serious black and blue craftsmanship. Widely distributed, available at Wine Exchange, or www.castlerock.com.

Pinot Noir— the Proverbial Date from Hell

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Some feel the current Pinot Noir frenzy is a macho thing: Anyone who makes Pinot Noir just wants to get laid. It's the world's sexiest grape and a manly thing to say you make Pinot.

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Dusky Goose Pinot Noir Takes Flight

Former Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt along with wife Diana and in collaboration with John and Linda Carter, have produced the **Dusky Goose 2002 Pinot Noir**. The owners utilize sustainable agricultural practices on a 17 acre vineyard site, designated the Goldschmidt Vineyard, in Dundee's Red Hills. Lynn Penner-Ash is the winemaker and Andy Humphrey the vineyard manager. Yields are between one-and-three-quarters and two-and-a quarter tons per acre. The vineyard is a mix of 28 year old Pommard and Wadensvil vines and newer Dijon clones.

On the Dusky Goose label Neal Goldschmidt announces "I am fortunate to love wine and I feel a respect for the people who started this industry. We are standing on the shoulders of giants and want to add value to this community— no shortcuts."

The name of the wine honors the rare Dusky Goose that migrates to the Willamette Valley from Alaska each winter. Production is limited to 350 cases and is available through a mailing list and select restaurants in Oregon, California, and New York in the spring of 2004.

More Duck Talk: Migration Pinot Noir

Goldeneye has just announced the inaugural release of **2001 Migration Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**. The wine is from declassified (a technical term for not good enough) lots not considered up to meeting Goldeneye's high quality standards. The wine is excellent, but not exceptional enough for the final Goldeneye blend (read we have too much wine and need to sell it at a discount). Beginning with the 2001 vintage, a second Pinot Noir named Migration will be produced yearly. It is a lighter style than Goldeneye and sells for \$26— no bargain but half the price of Goldeneye.

The Migration label depicts a flock of Goldeneye ducks migrating along the Pacific Coast. The original painting is part of the waterfowl art collection on display at the winery. Goldeneye is located in the heart of Anderson Valley, near the town of Philo, along the migratory pathway of the common Goldeneye duck. 707-895-3202



Really Big Cheeses

The American Cheese Society recently held its 20th annual contest to find the best American cheese. Over 600 cheeses were entered. The winner was **Red Hawk**, a relatively new, triple cream Epiose-style cheese made in Marin County from organic milk by Cowgirl Creamery. The cheese maker was Sue Conley. Although the recommended drink matches for the cheese were beer and cider, I would like to try this runny Epiose with a good Burgundy. The cheese must be removed from its packaging and set under a bowl for at least 24 hours, or until it is just losing its shape and becoming pillowy. The cheese can be purchased direct from Cowgirl Creamery or try local gourmet markets like Bristol Farms and Whole Foods.

Runners-Up were **Gran Canaria** (wine-cured sheep's milk cheese from Wisconsin), **Fiscalini Bandaged Cheddar** (an aged, blond cheddar from Modesto), **Mobay** (a combination of sheep's and goat's milk separated by ash from Wisconsin), **Spring Hill Jersey Jack** (from dairy in Petaluma, in Sonoma County, almost identical to Vella's famous dry Jack), and **Weston Wheel** (aged sheep's milk cheese from Vermont).

Deerfield Ranch Wines

One of the recent Orange County Fair Gold Medal winners was the **2000 Deerfield Ranch Winery Cohn Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$37)**. I had not heard of this Pinot Noir producer but I tried the wine and did some research.

The Deerfield Ranch Winery produces small lots of handcrafted wine from Northern California vineyards (17 vineyards currently under contract). The wines are a collaboration of winemaker and owner Robert Rex and winemaker Michael Browne (who also owns Kosta Browne— a small facility near Sebastopol which produces 1000 cases of excellent Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc). The current tasting room is at the Family Wineries of Sonoma Valley facility in Kenwood. Current production is 12,000 cases of several varietals, but eventually 25,000 cases will be produced at a new winery to open in 2004 on 47 acres along Sonoma Highway in Kenwood. The new facility will have a gravity-fed winery with barrel aging caves, hospitality center, and the Kenwood Wetlands Marsh Nature Center.

The 2000 Pinot Noir has won several awards besides an Orange County Gold: Gold Medal Hilton Head WineFest 2003, Wine Enthusiast 91, and Pinot Noir Shootout 90 (13 out of 171 wines).. I found the wine to be quite attractive with aroma of candied strawberry, low tannins, elegant and smooth. Maybe a little lean. A good but not great Pinot that is priced a bit high. The etched label is impressive. 342 cases. 707-833-5215.

Cooper Mountain Vineyards

Winery founder Dr. Robert Gross is a strong believer in “biodynamic” agriculture. The biodynamic approach is said to enhance organic or near-organic growing practices. Although several detractors have complained that organic growing is too much trouble, Gross feels the special care given to the vineyard by the biodynamic method has met and exceeded his expectations. Cooper Mountain recently became the first fully organic winery after a long and complicated approval process. The only non-organic added substance is sulfur, which occurs naturally in vineyards and has been used as a preservative in wine since winemaking began.

Cooper Mountain has three tiers of Pinot Noir: the basic Estate label which is a good Pinot made with organically grown grapes at \$10, reserve Pinot which is a more selective bottling at \$15, and a top of the line premium reserved for vineyard-designated or highly selective vintages and displaying a biodynamic “five elements” label which shows the figure of Demeter.

New Book: Wine Grape Varieties

The newly published reference book, *Wine Grape Varieties in California*, is a 188-page volume for grapegrowers and wine fanatics. Released in July by the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, it provides a comprehensive guide to more than three dozen varieties grown in California.

Although there is extensive talk of technical growing issues, everyone will appreciate the color photos, which are the real stars of the book. Almost grape porn, the photos are beautifully detailed, full-page spreads of 37 grape varieties caught at peak ripeness. A special photography technique using reflected light was used by photographer Kelly Clark. Most of us have tasted a lot of wines, but we have never seen the grapes on the vine as portrayed herein.

\$30, can be ordered at 800-994-8849 or online at www.anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu.

“I love you, I love you my wild
grapevine and if love is like
wine you are my predilection,
From your hands to your feet
you are the wineglass of
hereafter and my bottle of
destiny.

Pablo Neruda –from a label tag on
Erath Vineyards *Le Nuit Magique*
Pinot Noir

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir


PrinceofPinot.com

“Burgundy...a minefield of potential disappointments beloved by elitists and pseudointellectuals who like to discuss ad nauseam growers and terroirs— not quality. Although Burgundy has helped raise the overall standards of winemaking, its failures and overpriced mediocrities sadly outnumber its truly profound efforts. To paraphrase the late, great A. J. Liebling, “Burgundy is great when someone else is buying it.”

-Robert M. Parker, Jr.

Everett Ridge Winery

Everett Ridge Winery has roots that run deep in Sonoma-Mendocino County history. In 1878, a young Everett Wise founded the second Winery in Dry Creek Valley. The Winery’s historic redwood barn, depicted on the label, was home to horses, mules, and stagecoach teams.

Everett ridge is committed to becoming Certified Organic and Biodynamic. Each of the four estate vineyard sites have been planted with the ideal varietal, for it’s microclimate, elevation, exposure, and soil type. The Powerhouse Vineyard at the northern end of Potter Valley is bordered on four sides by mountains and bisected by the East Fork of the Russian River. 40 acres here were converted from hay fields to plant Pinot Noir. The soil is well-drained and rich loam supports abundant growth, but Spring and Fall frosts create many sleepless nights for the vineyard crew.



2001 Everett Ridge “Organic” Powerhouse Vineyard Mendocino Pinot Noir (\$18). 224 cases. Gold Medal West Coast Wine Competition and Los Angeles County Fair Wine Competition. Deep, black cherry fruit, hints of violet and spices with a smokey quality reminiscent of wild game. Well-balanced acidity. A nice mouth filling Pinot. Like getting sandwiched by the Barber twins (Tiki and Ronde) - black and blue and worth the licking. 800-566-6983.