

PinotFile[©]

Mr Stox

Mr Stox Restaurant in Anaheim, California celebrated its 25th Anniversary recently. This superb restaurant has been a consistent high achiever on the culinary and wine scene in Orange County. Operated by Ron and Chick Marshall, both enthusiastic wine lovers, the restaurant has had a *Wine Spectator* Grand Award since 1983. Only one other restaurant in Southern California has maintained a Grand Award for such a long period of time (Valentino in Santa Monica, since 1981). Grand Award winners typically offer 1,250 or more selections and feature serious breadth of top producers and verticals, outstanding depth in mature vintages, and a selection of large-format bottles. Wine service is superior and the wine list is in excellent harmony with the menu. Of the 3,360 restaurants honored by the *Wine Spectator*, only 89 restaurants have a Grand Award. Corkage at Mr Stox is a reasonable \$15. The menu targets conventioners from Anaheim Convention Center and sports fans who attend the nearby games at Anaheim Stadium and The Pond. However, the chef, Scott Raczek is very accomplished, and he will willingly construct a special menu for groups of eight or more that will match perfectly with the wines selected. In addition, the restaurant offers periodic wine dinners with the winemakers, and participation dinners in which participants go into the kitchen and cook their own dinner (an experience very rare in the restaurant industry). Ron and Chick travel frequently to the wine country and their contacts in the wine industry gives them a heady selection of desirable Pinots and other wines on the Grand Award list. Highly recommended!

Celebrity Wines

What do the following celebrities have in common: Sting, Mick Hucknail, Sam Neill, Greg Norman, Ernie Els, Gerard Depardieu, Olivia Newton-John, Carole Bouquet, Francis Ford Coppola, Shane Warne, and Sir Cliff Richard? They are all “into wine”. Some own vineyards, some have lent their monikers to other people’s products, and some make their own wine. Depardieu makes several wines.

Be aware that fame comes at a price, at least for the consumer. In many cases there are dozens of better value wines, but the trend is appealing to consumers.

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir

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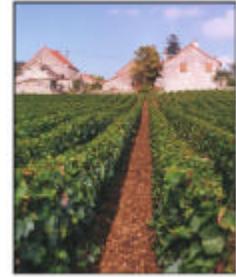
Beets and Pinot Noir are a marriage made in heaven. Beets can be a treat, especially when they are roasted to bring out their natural sweetness and earthiness. Be careful, for red beets will “bleed” and stain your hands as well as the other ingredients in your recipe. Keep the beets separate until you are ready for the final assembly.

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Vincent Girardin

Many consider the ambitious and dynamic Vincent Girardin to be the best source of Burgundy today. He is based in Meursault (he moved from Santenay in 2002), where he built a 2.8 million dollar state-of-the-art 67,000 square foot winery with separate white and red winemaking facilities. His family has been in the wine business for 11 generations. He inherited 25% of his father's vineyards in 1982 and started his winery that year. Over the last 20 years he has built up his holdings to 34.58 acres in Chassagne-Montrachet, Meursault, Pommard, Beaune, and Savigny-les-Beaune (average age of vines 30 years). For vineyards he doesn't own, he employs a system of leasing called "fermage" in which he purchases grapes, moves them to his cellars in Meursault, and makes the wine there. Current production is 46,000 cases/yr from 60 different appellations.



Production is concentrated on lesser known appellations of the Cotes de Beaune where he can offer many bargains. His wines are the result of severe pruning to minimize production and maximize intensity. He neither fines nor filters. The consistency of his wines is astonishing. One word— "elegant" - describes his wines. They are not black or tannic, nor chewy or herbaceous. Purity of fruit and lovely color are consistent features. His wines are of high quality and worth seeking out. Wine Club in Santa Ana is currently offering futures on 2002 red Burgundies from Girardin at ridiculously low prices.

Sine Qua Non Makes Parker Smile

The quirky wines of husband and wife team Elaine and Manfred Krankl are worth seeking out. These wines are truly "garage" wines— made in a warehouse-winery located adjacent to a few junkyards in the commercial area of Ventura. They produce one Pinot Noir made from fruit purchased from the Shea Vineyard in Willamette Valley, Oregon. This famous vineyard supplies several well-known producers in Oregon but Sine Qua Non may be the best Pinot Noir from this vineyard. Each year the wine has a different name— "The Ox", "aCapella" and a different label. According to Robert Parker, the 2001 Pinot Noir Shea Vineyard "is a remarkable effort from a challenging vintage". The 2002 Pinot Noir Shea Vineyard, states Parker, "is one of the greatest Pinots I have ever tasted from Oregon".

The mailing list is full, but the wines are available on the secondary market, ie winecommune.com

Life-Extending Chemical in Red Wines

Resveratrol, a naturally occurring chemical in the skin of white and red wine, may have the potential of making people live longer by activating an ancient survival reflex. The ancient strategy, formed early in evolution and built into all animals allows an organism, when food is scarce, to live longer. Biologists have been hoping to find some chemical or drug that would mimic caloric restriction in people by tripping the same genetic circuitry as a reduced-calorie diet does. So far, researchers have shown that resveratrol prolongs life span only in yeast, a fungus, by 70 percent, and in fruit flies. A mouse study is planned later this year. Despite the years of testing ahead to prove that resveratrol has any effect in people, many of the scientists involved have already started drinking red wine. Only fresh wine will do as resveratrol is unstable on exposure to the air and goes off within a day of popping the cork. Investigators are working on chemical modifications of resveratrol that would be more stable. Resveratrol is found in amounts 10 times higher in red wine than white wine because of differences in the manufacturing process. Pinot Noir tends to have high levels of the chemical. Diet-mimicking drugs might add a decade of life to someone starting them at age 50.

Chalone's New Pinot— Orogeny Vineyards

Orogeny (rhymes with homogeny) Vineyards is the newest Pinot Noir project in the long history of Chalone Wine Group's world-class Pinot Noirs (Edna Valley Vineyard in San Luis Obispo, Echelon Vineyards in the Central Coast, Acacia Vineyard in Napa's Carneros, and Chalone Estate Vineyard in the Gavilan Mountains). When Tom Selfridge joined Chalone Wine Group as president in 1998, he brought almost 30 years of wine experience with him. Using his knowledge of Sonoma County, he looked to the Green Valley subappellation in the southwest corner of the Russian River Valley. The plan is to source grapes from a handful of small vineyards, each only 10-15 acres. In addition, a Pinot Noir will be produced from Marin County, an emerging area for cool climate grapes. In Marin, Chalone has a long-term lease on 20 acres that sit above the morning fog that rolls in from the Pacific Ocean.

One of the county's most experienced winegrowers, the Dutton Family, will custom grow the grapes. The winemaker will be Dan Goldfield, a recognized authority on making cold-climate Pinot Noir. His credentials include winemaking experience at La Crema and Hartford Court. The first release date is Spring 2004.

Cool Climate and Pinot Noir

Pinot Noir is a fast-ripening grape that, in warm climates, can develop too much sugar before it develops enough flavor. The outcome is a high-alcohol wine without enough color or taste. Cooler weather is needed to extend the hangtime. Grapes that hang on the vines longer have higher intensity, higher color and brighter fruit. They also produce wine with firmer acidity, which enhances the wine's aging potential and compatibility with food. Of course there is a risk of cool-climate agriculture and long hangtime— namely, mildew and botrytis. This requires more vigilant farming— one of the factors adding to the high expense of world-class Pinot Noirs.

In the winery, a hands-off attitude is required— the less interference, the better. Pinot Noir does not like to be jostled or interfered with. Other varieties are more forgiving, but with Pinot you do not get a second chance.

The Pinnacle of Pinot Noir

Lalou Bize-Leroy said that it took her twenty years to realize that DRC Romanee-Conti is the greatest vineyard in all of red Burgundy. There probably is no greater expression of wine on this planet, and it is priced accordingly (1 bottle from great years currently sells at auction for \$4,000 to \$5,000). Like a Beethoven symphony, it soars to heights no other wine can reach. I have had the pleasure of drinking both the 1990 and 1999 vintage of Romanee-Conti and I must say, the 1990 was the greatest Pinot Noir I have ever drunk

How about it's counterpart in Chardonnay? Of course there is DRC Montrachet, but many wine experts feel that Coche-Dury's Corton Charlemagne is the most dramatic Chardonnay. It is endowed with ripeness and texture; it is full but never heavy. Coche-Dury's precise winemaking style is responsible for this profound example of Chardonnay. 1 bottle can sell at auction for between \$1,500 and \$3,500.



NED THOMPSON, UNPRETENTIOUS WINE TASTER.

La Crema is the most popular Pinot Noir in the *Wine & Spirits* 13th Annual Restaurant Poll


PrinceofPinot.com

New Zealand is a new region for Pinot Noir, so you will not find wines with the finesse and polish of Burgundy, or even California and Oregon. The Pinots tend to be light and more herbal than most Pinots. The best ones, however, have some complexity and good acidity making them good food wines. The model for New Zealand Pinots is Burgundy: small growers, small production from very specific sites. The island's extreme climate can pose unforgiving challenges and in some areas the vines are under snow in the winter. There are 5,000 acres of Pinot Noir in New Zealand, representing a five-fold increase in plantings since 1995. Acreage is expected to expand 62% in the next three years.

The Punt

By the 18th century, different wine regions of Europe invented signature-style bottles to mark their territory as well as adjust for the needs of their particular wine. The burgundy-type bottle (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Viognier, Syrah) is shapely with a tapered neck since the Burgundian founding fathers didn't need a trap for dregs like their Bordeaux brothers whose bottle was designed with wide stern shoulders.

The punt is a deep indentation in a bottle's butt. It diffuses pressure and helps balance the gas— important in Champagne bottles. Normal wine bottles do not need a punt, but many producers keep it for tradition. Punts date to the time glass blowers produced bottles by hand using a wood stick to hold the glass from the neck end. After forming the bottle, the glass blower pulled out the stick, creating a punched-in bottom.