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**Pinot Noir: It's
the Ultimate
Expression of
Winemaking**

2002 Burgundy Vintage

2002 is surely one of the greatest harvests the Cote d'Or has experienced over the past 100 years. What's more, vinification techniques are the most advanced they have ever been. This is a very exciting time to buy Burgundy, in this classic vintage. Per-Henrik Mansson in *Wine Spectator* wrote, "On paper, this is as perfect a harvest as they come...I came away feeling that this is finally the vintage for which Burgundy has waited for so long". Put 2002 up there in the pantheon of great Burgundy vintages with 1929, 1949, 1959, 1978, 1990.



Facts about the 2002 Burgundy vintage:

Due to rigorous green harvesting, 2002 showed lower yields and riper fruit than those of 1990. Yields were much lower than 1999 for conscientious growers.

2002's potential alcohols were on average higher than 1996. Domaine Arlaud, for example, achieved the highest sugar levels in the history of the Domaine.

Despite the wines' super-richness, the wines have firm acidity and ripe, round tannins that will preserve them for many years to come.

Drought conditions in the Cote d'Or persisted into October. Wells dried up but the skies remained mostly overcast during harvest, which allowed the grapes to ripen slowly and fully. Just enough rain fell during harvest to swell the grapes and bring sugars and acidities back into balance—recalling the pattern of years like 1949, 1959, and 1990.

Viticultural and oenological know-how is at its highest level ever in Burgundy. Green harvesting and canopy management are more often the rule than the exception, and cellars are the cleanest and most modern they have ever been.

Millerandage (uneven berry formation) was rampant in 2002, producing lots of tiny grapes without very much juice. Millerandage means thicker, more concentrated wines.

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"Here's a vintage that has given some of the most exciting red and white wines of the last 30 years. In certain cases, the level of 1999 is exceeded and, in my memory, has no equivalent since 1959." - Michel Ber-tane in *La Revue du Vin de France*.

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Domaine Frederic Magnien

Frederic Magnien is widely regarded as one of the shrewdest and sharpest young winemakers working in the Cote d'Or today. His father Michel Magnien is a well-respected vigneron who produces wine in his own right from vineyards he owns, as well as being responsible for the vineyard management of Maison Louis Latour. Frederic has no vineyards— his talent lies in sourcing fruit from small holdings from the best plots in the finest vineyards. When he started out, he had many contacts through his father and he has now built up a network of growers in Morey St-Denis, Gevrey-Chambertin, Chambolle-Musigny, and Vosne Romanee. The Magnian family has been in Burgundy since forever. One member of the far flung Magnien clan even had a clone of Pinot Noir named for him at the turn of the century.

All of Frederic's preparation at the family domaine in Morey, a stint at a famous domaine in Chassagne, and at Calera in California has prepared him to make red and white wines of consuming opulence and beauty. He prunes old vines severely for yields around 30 hectoliters of wine per hectare of land. He does green harvests at appropriate times as the end of the vintage approaches, further concentrating the fruit. Before pressing, he gives the grapes a pre-fermentation "cold soak" to extract maximum color and flavor from the fully ripe skins. The new wine is transferred to new and used barrels using only gravity, left alone on their own lees, and not racked or touched until they are bottled. Fining and filtration are out of the question.

Frederic is only in his mid 30's and if you had to compare him to anyone it would be Neil Armstrong. He even looks a little bit like him with the buzz haircut. An example of his early seriousness about his future calling was his visit to the superstar Francois Freres cooperage when he was just a kid. He went by himself, and somehow established a relationship with the people there that is priceless today. The thing is, at Francois Freres there is oak— and then there is Rolls-Royce oak. The top of the line stuff is singled out very early and babied for a full three years before assembly. The most famous recipients of such largesse are the Domaine de la Romanee-Conti and Comtes de Lafon. The vast majority of Francois Freres customers get oak that is considerably younger and less seasoned. Imagine how crazy it seems that a young man like Frederic, without his own domaine and buying grapes from his neighbors, would have access to what is the best oak in the world for wine. Francois saw the potential early on and now as Frederic's reputation spikes every year, their investment is starting to pay off. By the way, Fred uses that illustrious oak for every single one of his wines, including even Bourgogne Rouge. What he loves about the older, drier oak is the way it breathes. The tiny bit of oxygen it allows inside allows him to avoid racking his wines during their entire stay in cask. This is just one reason why his wines taste so natural and un-manipulated.

2002 Futures available now www.northberkeleyimports.com 510-8488910

American Wine Awards

Food & Wine Magazine seventh annual American Wine Awards were announced in the magazine's latest issue:

Best Pinot Noir under \$20: 2001 A to Z Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (reviewed previously in PinotFile)

Best Pinot Noir over \$20: 2000 Littorai Sonoma Coast Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir (scored highly in the Superbowl of Pinot Noir hosted by the Prince and held at the Pacific Club last year)

Most promising new winery: Soter Vineyards, Willamette Valley— after selling Etude to Beringer-Blass in 1997, he returned to his native Oregon to found the 40-acre Soter Vineyards. Besides an estate Pinot Noir made from yields of two tons or less per acre, he also makes a brut rose style sparkling wine in the Krug or Bollinger style.

2002 Vintage On West Coast

The 2002 growing season for Pinot Noir was very favorable. As a whole, it produced some wonderfully flavorful grapes without excessive sugar levels. This combination of ripe fruit, fully flavored wines, and somewhat more moderate alcohol levels is often difficult to obtain in California as warmer late season weather often elevates sugars and their corresponding alcohols. There were some challenges in 2002 that had to be dealt with, most notably the very dry winter in Monterey and Santa Barbara.

Santa Rita Hills: This area has quickly become California's rising star of Pinot Noir. The 2001 vintage was extraordinary in the Santa Rita Hills producing perhaps the finest wines ever in Santa Barbara County. The 2002 vintage was more challenging because of what was basically drought conditions. The region received just over 4 inches of rain during the winter and those dry conditions lead to vines with a large number of blank shoots (shoots with no clusters) and also very small clusters. Crop loads were down significantly from 2001. Growers and wineries prepared for these conditions still made very impressive wines.

Santa Lucia Highlands: This area received over 7 inches of rain during the winter. This amount is significantly down from the norm. Already stressed vineyards could easily be pushed over the edge in these conditions but younger, more vigorous vines benefited from the additional stress. Some vineyards produced their finest wines ever and others produced good but not extraordinary wines.

Sonoma Coast, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Mountain: One of the highlights of the 2002 growing season is the wines coming from Sonoma County. The weather was cool and the rainfall was near normal. More importantly, the rains were spread throughout the winter months providing adequate nourishment to the vines. The wines show themselves to be consistently superior to their 2001 counterparts and will certainly rank amongst the finest produced from Sonoma County.

Willamette Valley: Oregon's Willamette Valley was a big winner in 2002. The vintage had all of the hallmarks of greatness. The weather was warm and extremely dry leading to elevated sugar levels. In such years Oregon can produce wines that are overripe, however, if the instinct to pick too ripe was curtailed the wines can show uncommon richness and great character. Some of these wines are the stars of the vintage.

Riedel Discovers the Black Goblet

As part of our wine tasting dinners, we have often broke out the "black goblets" in which we ask participants to identify the wine (white or red, varietal type) poured into the opaque black glasses. This always leads to many laughs as frequently tasters cannot even tell whether a wine is red or white when robbed of color clues provided by the traditional clear tasting glass.

Now Riedel has "pioneered" an opaque tasting glass. This glass is for wine drinkers wishing to stay completely in the dark about the wines they are tasting. The Austria-based stemware company has introduced the Blind Blind Tasting Glass, a jet-black, opaque glass that masks a wine's color. During a double-blind tasting, all of a wine's pedigree— including appellation, varietal, vintage, and producer— is concealed. Going further and eliminating knowledge of a wine's color prevents tasters from judging a wine through visual cues, such as clarity and deepness of hue.

Like the rest of Riedel's glasses, the Blind Blind glasses are handmade from full-lead crystal. Shaped like the collection's Zinfandel/Chianti glass, the blackness of the glass is obtained by adding metal manganese oxide— which is used to tint glass purple, or black if more is added— during the manufacturing process. The Blind Blind glasses retail for \$59 each.

Want to make your own Pinot? Pommard and Dijon clones of Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley are readily available. You can pick the grapes yourself or have them picked and processed. Multiple sources available in Oregon. Go to www.oregonwinepress.com

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir



PrinceofPinot.com

Siduri has released two 2002 appellation Pinot Noirs. The Sonoma County Pinot Noir (made from 6 different vineyards in the Sonoma Coast, Sonoma Mountain, and Russian River appellations) is only \$22. Very drinkable with plenty of red and black fruit flavors but with enough of a backbone to age a few years. The Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir is very forward and hedonistic. Priced at \$32, this wine is sourced from Pisoni, Gary's and Rosella's Vineyards. A lot of earth in this one with plenty of spice and vivacious fruit. Half bottles are also available for both wines.

707-578-3882

Patricia Green Cellars 2002 Pinot Noirs Released

The highly rated Pinots from Patricia Green Cellars have been released. Single vineyard wines include Balcombe 1B, Balcombe, Bonshaw, and Quail Hill Vineyards and the very very limited blend called "Notorious". Also a "Reserve" Pinot which is a blend of Goldschmidt, Shea, Eason, Estate and Quail Hill juice is available. The reserve is a blend, but only barrels from the best vineyards are used to blend the wine. Also a large percentage of new wood barrels is used.

The Notorious Pinot Noir is the best wine that PGC makes. It is aged in 100% Cadus barrels but you don't taste the oak as out of balance. The wine is unique in that the lees from the Balcombe vineyard are added back to each of the two barrels of Balcombe vineyard juice chosen for the wine. Lees can be bitter, coarse, or have no flavor, but in the case of the Balcombe vineyard, the lees sometimes have a wonderful quality. When added back to the barrel they add viscosity, density, richness and sweetness. The lees by themselves are similar in flavor to blackberry yogurt, fluffy and rich, and they are only added to new barrels— the flavor enhancement does not work in neutral barrels. The wine's nose is exotically rich, coffee and chocolate, the flavors are silky and viscous, with intense black fruit, spice, and pepper well integrated with the intense yet balanced tannins. There are hints of pomegranate, persimmon, autumn fruits, and tea in the long long finish. The wine will age well for up to 12 years. Only 45 cases made.

Most people familiar with Patty Green wines say they are accessible from the moment the cork pops, and age well in the cellar. Green is able to get great fruit extraction from her wines and wonderful aromatics. Her wines are very well balanced and great with good. [Www.avalonwines.com](http://www.avalonwines.com)