

PinotFile[©]

Ken Wright Cellars

In the 1970's, Ken Wright was waiting tables at the quaint Fig Tree Restaurant in Lexington, Kentucky. He developed a love for wine and he wanted to know how it came to be, how it developed such complexity. After selling everything he had, he moved to UC Davis to learn about winemaking. After several years of experience working in California wineries, he was ready to start his own. With \$25,000, he began in Carlton, Oregon, producing about 10 barrels of wine. He kept second jobs to survive, (ie he was winemaker at Domaine Serene), but by 1990 he was able to devote himself solely to his own winery.



Through the years Ken Wright has produced consistently acclaimed Pinot Noirs from various premium vineyard sources in the Willamette Valley. He strives to control each step in the winemaking process, including toasting his own oak barrels. Now he is building a new winery, and has purchased his own vineyard land. He currently produces 11 vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs each with distinctive characteristics that reflect the unique terroir of the vineyard.

Dundee Hills: Nysa Vineyard— planted in 1990 to own-rooted Pommard and Wadenswil. 350 cases.

Eola Hills: Canary Hill Vineyard— planted in 1982-3, Pommard clone, 625 cases; Carter Vineyard— planted in 1983, multiple clones, 650 cases; Elton Vineyard— planted in 1983 to Pommard clone, 140 cases.

Yamhill-Carlton Districts: Guadalupe Vineyard— planted in 1989, Wadenswil clone, 400 cases; McCrone Vineyard— planted to Dijon 115 and 777 clones, 700 cases; Savoya Vineyard— owned by Ken Wright Cellars, planted in 1888 to Dijon clones 115 and 777, 240 cases; Shea Vineyard— fruit sourced from 3 blocks, 725 cases; Wahle Vineyard— planted in 1974, Pommard clone, 200 cases.

Coastal Range: Freedom Hill Vineyard— planted to Pommard clone in 1980, 340 cases; Meredith Mitchell Vineyard— planted in 1988 to Pommard clone, 310 cases.

Ken Wright Cellars, 800-571-6825, www.kenwrightcellars.com.

**It Ain't the Beaus
Ya Know, It's the
Beaus Ya Lay**

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Both the excellent 2001 and 2002 vintages of Ken Wright Pinot Noirs are now available. 750's are \$40 and magnums \$80. Sources include brownrby.com, avalonwine.com, oregonpinot-noir.com, and kenwrightcellars.com.

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2002 Shea Wine Cellars Pinot Noirs Released

Back in June of this year, Dick Shea, owner of Shea Vineyard and Shea Wine Cellars was kind enough to let me taste his then in barrel 2002 Pinot Noirs. I was extremely impressed and wrote previously about the availability of 2002 futures (PinotFile Vol 2, Issue 46). The 2002 Pinot Noirs, now released, were made by winemaker Sam Tannahill from sections of the Shea Vineyard that were previously sold to other wineries. Sam uses techniques that bring out the best from Pinot Noir, including fermenting the grapes in wooden barrels, a technique notoriously hard to control. The wines from Shea Wine Cellars are redolent of spice cake, raspberry coulis, and sweet, opulent strawberry jam notes.



Shea Estate Pinot Noir 2002 \$35 A very appealing “starter” wine for Shea neophytes.

Shea Block 23 Pinot Noir 2002 \$48 Sweet and dense with an almost Grand-Cru finish.

Shea Block 32 Pinot Noir 2002 \$48 Sappy frambiose, musky, earthy undertones, will get better with time.

Shea “Homer” Pinot Noir 2002 \$60 A blend of the vineyard’s best barrels, named after Dick Shea’s love for

Sine Qua Non Lucky 6 2001 Pinot Noir

Manfred Krankl has been making small lots of Pinot Noir (among other wines) in his tiny facility in Ventura since 1996. His wines are unique in that he never makes the same wine twice— he changes the colorful name, bottles them in irregularly shaped bottles, and adorns them with distinctive labels featuring his own artwork. In a few short years, Sine Qua Non has become one of the most sought after “cult” Pinot Noirs. Only available by mailing list (which has a huge waiting list as well), buyers must seek out auction sources like winecommune.com to grab a bottle. Expect to pay \$150 per btl.

Manfred Krankl is the only out-of-state purchaser of Shea Vineyard fruit. What stands out most about the Shea Vineyard to Manfred is the quality of fruit it produces because of dedicated vineyard management. The Lucky 6 2001 Pinot Noir is the latest release. Something indispensable and long-awaited, it is tastier than a Paris Hilton pictorial. Close to XXX.

Sine Qua Non uses Shea Vineyard fruit because “it’s a very good site and has great terroir.”

Drew Family Winery

The inaugural release of **Drew Family 2002 “Gatekeepers” Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$30) is available on a very limited basis (75 cases).

Drew Family is a collaboration of Aussie Jason Drew who has worked at Josph Phelps, Corison, Lunia, and Babcock Vineyards, his wife Molly, and brother Mark. The wine is a blend of two vineyards— Rio Vista and Ashley’s Vineyards. These two vineyards form the far east and west ends of the Santa Rita Hills creating a beautiful blend of this revered Pinot Noir appellation. A gorgeous and limited Pinot Noir. 4.1 in the 40.



More Wine Books

The BLT Cookbook, Michele Anna Jordan. \$15 Recipes for BLT variations, plus BLT-inspired appetizers, soups and salads. Also best wine pairing for BLT (hint: Pinot Noir).

True To Our Roots, Paul Dolan. This book details the guiding principles behind Fetzer Vineyards' remarkable growth. Paul Dolan has led the way to sustainability in California viticulture, and has demonstrated that one person in one company can transform an entire industry.

Wine for Women: A Guide to Buying, Pairing, and Sharing Wine, Leslie Sbrocco \$25. Actually written and of interest to both sexes, this guide is an entertaining treatise on demystifying wine. The author is a well-known wine writer, speaker, wine judge, and contributor to *The San Francisco Chronicle*. The book is organized by chapters on different grape varieties. Also included are sections on wine-food pairing, storing wine, and holding blind tastings. Basically a comfortable read with little winespeak.

A good discount source for wine books is amazon.com. But a new company, overstock.com consistently beats Amazon's prices by 25%.

Oregon Wine Country Trip

"Pilgrimage for the Perfect Pinot Noir" is a 5 day trip through the heart of the Oregon Wine Country hosted by Bob Wolfe, owner of The Oregon Pinot Noir Club, the largest national retailer of Oregon Pinot Noir. He is a former journalist and a prominent wine writer, teacher, and wine judge. The trip includes a Ken Wright Cellars tour and luncheon, McKinlay and Sineann winemaker dinner, Domaine Serene tour and tasting, Brick House winemaker dinner, Beaux Freres and Patricia Green winemaker dinner, Carlton Winemakers Studio tour, Cristom winemaker dinner with Chef Phillippe Boulot, 5 nights in the Heathman Hotel in Portland, and luxury motorcoach transportation. The trip gives you an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at Oregon's very best Pinot Noir wines and personalities. Cost is \$3892 for two inclusive.

The Oregon Pinot Noir Club (www.oregonpinotnoir.com) is an excellent source for top Oregon Pinot Noirs such as Cristom, Beaux Freres, Patricia Green, Shea Wine Cellars, Sineann, Bergstrom, and Penner-Ash.

Wine Myths

Myth #1: one can determine the quality aspects of a wine by its "legs." These "legs" occur when you swirl the wine in the glass and let it settle back down. A thin film of liquid adheres to the sides of the glass and slowly comes down in irregular rivulets. The truth is that since wine is made up primarily of two liquids with different viscosities, water and alcohol, they separate into different streams when traveling down the sides of the glass. The only real determination that can be effectively made by observing the "legs" is that the wine contains some percentage of alcohol.

Myth #2: Corks provide breathing or oxygen transfer during aging. The enemy of any wine is oxygen. Once a wine is in contact with oxygen, it begins to deteriorate in much the same way as iron rusts. A properly sealed cork allows absolutely no transfer of oxygen, but being a natural product, has a failure rate of 10%. The truth is that a screw cap would be the best closure, but alas, tradition rules, and the myth continues.



If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir


Princeofpinot.com

Ok wine geeks, lets test your knowledge. What do the following names refer to?

Chalufour, Damy, Demptos American, Ermitage, Francois Freres, Lafitte American, Gamba, Gillet, Martine, Meyrieux.

Answer: Red wine barrels

Lafitte American barrels are American oak air-dried in France and coopered in France, then shipped back. Lafitte feels the microorganisms and weather conditions of France are much different then America and thus feel it to be an important part of the air drying practices. This barrel gives mouth fee and roundness to a wine, but is a component barrel used in small quantities.

Babcock Winery & Vineyards

Brian Babcock was named by the Los Angeles Times as the “Most Courageous Winemaker of the Year” for his daring style. He is fanatic about understanding the personality of each vineyard of his family owned winery at the edge of the Santa Ynez Valley. The prestigious James Beard Foundation chose Bryan as one of the “Top Ten Small Production Winemakers in the World,” the only American chosen for this oenological dream team. His Pinot Noirs are exquisitely crafted and great values.

The winery and 80 acres of vineyards are located in the heart of the Santa Rita Hills appellation of Santa Barbara County. Currently, new vineyards are being planted and a new barrel aging facility is being built.

Current releases:

Babcock Winery Grand Cuvee Pinot Noir 2001 \$30 A top finisher in our recent Le Grand Crew Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir tasting.

Babcock Winery Cargasacchi Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir 2001 \$40

Babcock Winery Santa Barbara County 2001 \$18 First place Vintner’s Club San Francisco tasting. *Wine Enthusiast* 91 and *Wine Spectator* 89. A great value Pinot.

Babcock Winery Tri-Counties Cuvee Pinot Noir 2002 Early release program only.

The wines are widely available at wine retailers or the winery– 805-736-1455. The Babcock family also own Walt’s Wharf in Seal Beach and Oysters in Corona Del Mar, two excellent restaurants with extensive wine lists including all of the above Babcock wines.

