

PinotFile[©]

World Of Pinot Noir

The world's biggest Pinot Noir party will take place at the Cliffs Resort in Shell Beach on March 5-6, 2004. Over one hundred and ten Pinot Noir producers from around the world (but mainly California) will participate in this 4th Annual two-day conference.

Tasting seminars examine the relationship between winemakers and growers, the emerging AVAs of Oregon, regional examination of the Sonoma Coast, terroir expression, and Pinot Noir and cheese. Pinot Noir tastings by the sea will be held on Friday and Saturday afternoons. Friday night will feature a Pinot Noir dinner with Guest Chef Michel Richard, a pioneer in French/Californian cuisine. Also a panel of sommeliers from across the United States will present and discuss some of their favorite Pinot Noir wines. A featured tasting will be conducted by renowned Cote d'Or winemaker Christophe Roumier, of Domaine Georges Roumier. The finale will be a Santa Barbara-style Paulee Dinner at the Au Bon Climat Winery.

Cost for the even is \$675 per person. Attendance is extremely limited. For information and registration visit www.wopn.com.

I will be attending and hope to see some readers at this great event. Please e-mail me for any questions about the conference.

Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival

A smaller, but nonetheless popular Pinot Noir event will be held May 14-16, 2004. The event kicks off with a Technical Pinot Noir Conference on Friday, followed by a Pinot Noir Tasting and Winemaker Dinners on Saturday. On Sunday, open houses and special tastings are held at the wineries. I have featured many top Pinots from Anderson Valley vineyards in the PinotFile including Goldeneye, Londer Vineyards, Esterlina, Elke Vineyards, Skewis, Adrian Fog, and Littorai.

Attendance is also limited for this Festival and accommodations are few in the Anderson Valley so don't delay if you plan to attend. Tickets are available at www.avwines.com after March 1. Call 707-895-WINE.

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir

Volume 3, Issue 22

January 26, 2004

Anderson Valley is greatly impacted by fog. The winemakers here have learned to turn fog into Pinot Noir. The area's unique balance of ocean breezes and summer heat is ideal for producing luscious and elegant Pinots.

Inside this issue:

2002 Burgundy	2
Anne Gros	2
Hamilton Russell	3
Pinot For Less in Oregon	3
La Cave de Mon Lis	3
Aromas/Flavors of Pinot Noir	4
Dom Bertagna	4

Burgundy 2002

Burgundies from the excellent 2002 vintage are beginning to show up at retailers and Pinot enthusiasts should think seriously about stocking up on wines from the lower appellations and those at the regional and commune-level (Bourgogne and Village level). Allen Meadows (aka Burghound), states that “2002 is the most consistent vintage I have ever seen in 25 years of visiting this region. There is not much difference between the quality of lower level appellations compared to 1er and Grand Crus. 2002 produced a huge number of satisfying, delicious, utterly seductive wines that will please everyone. Even the notoriously rustic wines from Gevrey Chambertin are elegant and fine. The wines from 2002 can be drunk early as well as late.” When searching for a Bourgogne or Village wine, look first to the producer, and then follow the Burgundy map north as the wines get better, the farther north you go.

Allen goes on to point out that the best wines came from Vosne Romanee, Chambolle Musigny, Morey St.-Denis, and Gevrey Chambertin. Producers to look for include Arnoux, Bachelet, Chevillon, Gouges, Dugat-Py, Geantet-Ponsiot, Gros, Hudelot-Noellat, Lignier, Meo-Cazumet, Mortet, Perriot-Minot, Potel, Roty, Touget, and Trapet.



Many winos interested in Burgundy give up quickly when they attempt to purchase a wine they have read or heard about and then can't find it. In the United States distribution of Burgundy is spotty, quantities are small, and knowledgeable noiristes snap up the good stuff very quickly. Fortunately there are some good sources:

North Berkeley Wine: 800-266-6585, terrific newsletter, get on their e-mailing list.

Wine Club: stores in Santa Ana, San Francisco, and Santa Clara; talk to Greg Koslosky, manager of the Santa Ana store and Burgundy buyer; 800-966-5432, www.thewineclub.com.

Burgundy Wine Company: a New York retailer, the first to specialize in Burgundy in the US; sign up for e-mail newsletter; 212-691-9092.

Wine-searcher.com: an excellent free source for locating wines

Froogle.google.com: a service from Google for finding products for sale online. Locates stores that sell the elusive wine you want. Very fast.

High-Priestess of Vosne-Romanee

Anne Gros has several lower end offerings that have improved in recent years and are very good in 2002. The Bourgognes drink far above their humble level. Two to look for:

2002 Anne Gros Bourgogne Hautes-Cotes-de-Nuits Rouge (\$36) From the village of Concoeur, high above and to the west of Vosne-Romanee.

2002 Anne Gros Bourgogne Rouge (\$36) One of my favorites which I purchase nearly every year. This wine is made from parcels that are approximately 15 years old, located between Vosne-Romanee and Nuits St.-Georges on the flat side of RN 74. A baby Vosne-Romanee, it shows the typical spice of this appellation and is plush and lovable.

Hamilton Russell Vineyards Pinot Noir

One of my friends, Ed Buckley, returned recently from South Africa and we shared an unusual Pinot Noir over dinner. The wine was from Hamilton Russell Vineyards, one of the most southerly wineries in South Africa. Located in the Walker Bay district behind the old fishing village of Hermanus, the Estate is only a few miles inland from the south Atlantic. Founder Tim Hamilton-Russell searched for 10 years to find the ideal terroir to establish a vineyard capable of producing top quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. He developed the site from scratch in the 1970s and has now handed over the Estate to his son Anthony.

The 64 hectares of vineyards are all located on the Hamilton Russell Estate, including 23 hectares of Pinot Noir. The site has allowed them to make South Africa's best Chardonnay and an excellent Pinot Noir, 18 vintages of Pinot Noir have shown a unique expression of the personality of the terroir. The vines are low-yielding and planted in maritime influenced, northeast facing, stony, clay-rich slopes.

Interestingly, the Pinot sells for \$24, not expensive for an estate grown and produced Pinot Noir, but high-priced compared to most South African wines. Most of it is exported to the UK, since South Africans rarely spend this much on wine. I found the wine very enjoyable after it opened up. Redolent of spice and berry coulis, it had earthy undertones and a pleasing presence on the palate. As the Aussies would say, fair dinkum.

Pinot for Less in Oregon

Good vineyard land in Oregon costs \$10,000 to \$12,000 an acre. Good land in Napa costs at least \$80,000 an acre and often more than \$100,000. Building costs in Oregon are half what they are in Napa. Equipment and labor costs are about the same. Politics and official rules are much more complicated in Napa. For the last several years, Napa has been anti-development, discouraging new wineries. In Oregon they welcome new wineries with open-arms and help is readily available. Usage permits for an Oregon Winery cost \$1,600 while permits for a Napa winery of the same size would cost \$26,000.

The result of this discrepancy has been that there are now over 800 vineyards and 200 wineries in the Willamette Valley alone in a 50-mile radius south and west of Portland. There is also significant vineyard development in the Umpqua Valley, south of Willamette Valley, and the Rogue Valley near the California border. A new wave of winemakers-Patricia Green, Eric Hammacher, Lemelson, Dick Shea, and Ken Wright among them-have flooded the Oregon landscape with terrific Pinot Noirs.

La Cave de Mon Lis

It seems that not a week goes by that I don't run across a new producer of Pinot Noir in California or Oregon. La Cave de Mon Lis is a small start-up business which produces hand crafted wines. The ultimate goal is to make a world-class Pinot Noir. The first release was a 2002 Sangee de Pinot Noir (\$15), released in June of 2003. This is a salmon-colored wine barrel-fermented in French oak and has a fresh vibrant aroma of strawberries and raspberries. In the Spring of 2004, the 2002 Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$35) will be released. The vineyard is located in the Santa Lucia Highlands and has been a source of Pinot Noir grapes for Talbott, Testerosa, and others.





Typical Pinot Noir Aromas and Flavors:

Fruit: cherry, strawberry, raspberry, ripe tomato
 Floral: violet, rose petal
 Spice: peppermint, rosemary, cinnamon, caraway
 Herbal: rhubarb, beet, oregano, green tea, black olive

Typical Pinot Noir Processing Bouquets/ Flavors:

Terroir: mushroom, earth, barnyard, truffle, leather, meat
 Oak (light): vanilla, coconut, sweet wood
 Oak (heavy): oak, smoke, toast, tar
 Bottle age: cedar, cigar box

* This chart is used at UC Davis to train students to describe the aromas and flavors of Pinot Noir

Domaine Bertagna

This Domaine was established in Burgundy in the late 1940's by the Bertagna family. In 1983 the property was purchased by the Gunther Reh family. In 1988 Eva Reh and her husband, Mark Siddle took over complete control of the Domaine.

Over the past 12 years the Domaine has undergone a complete transformation. The vineyards have been revitalized, and the winery modernized. The Domaine's vineyards lie in many of the greatest terroir's of the Cote d'Or, including five Grand Cru and seven Premiers Cru sites.

There has been a recent change in winemaker at the Domaine, with Roland Masse leaving to work at the Hospices de Beaune. Clair Forestier has taken over wine-making responsibilities and has already made an impact. While oak plays an important role at the Domaine, it no longer intrudes on the fruit. Claire believes that "Wine should taste of the character of the particular vineyard site, not of a particular forest. Fruit flavor and complexity is very important, with the oak giving structure."

Domaine Bertagna's wines are densely colored and fleshy, packed with spicy fruit and well-integrated oak. They are seamless wines that can be enjoyed young, but deserve cellaring to show their best. The Vosne-Romanee 1er Cru Les Beaux Monts and the Grand Cru Clos Saint Denis are consistent successes.

In 2002 the Grand Cru Clos de Vougeot produced some exceptional wines. The **2002 Domaine Bertagna Clos de Vougeot** is well-regarded (91-94 Burghound).

