

PinotFile[©]

**Pinot Noir Isn't
The Only Wine,
But Its Way
Ahead of
Whatever Is in
2nd Place**

Frosty Pinot Noir

Canada is considered to be a cool climate viticulture region where temperatures during the fruit-ripening phase are moderate and consistent with long hours of sunshine. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Riesling seem to be readily adaptable to the cool climates of Canada. Pioneering vintner Johann Schiller domesticated the native labrusca grape, planting a small vineyard in 1811 near present-day Mississauga, Ontario. He became known as the father of Canadian wine.

The Okanagan Valley, home to British Columbia's best wine, is quietly becoming a significant wine growing region. Over 30 wineries are currently producing some excellent wines including award-winning Pinot Noirs. The Okanagan is one of four designated wine regions in British Columbia (the other three are Simikameen Valley, Fraser Valley and Vancouver, and Gulf Islands). Although the wine industry here is not as large as the one in Ontario, it is growing fast and the wines at their best are equal to the best that Ontario has to offer.

The Okanagan Valley receives the most number of heat units in Canada. The climate is almost desert like with great variation in daytime highs and night time lows. The lack of rain is compensated with irrigation from Lake Okanagan. The Valley is a leisurely four hour drive from Vancouver. (see page 4 for map of Valley).

Some Pinot Noir labels to look for include Blue Mountain, Calona (established in 1932), Cedar Creek Estate, Gray Monk Estate, Inniskillin, and Quail's Gate. The Okanagan Pinot Noirs typically show an attractive New World character with appealing fresh-fruit flavors and good balance.

2000 Blue Mountain Okanagan Pinot Noir (\$19). An interesting smoky, well-structured wine that could age even a little longer. Like Drew Barrymore— very successful at a young age— but mellowing over time. Available at HiTime.

2001 Jaden Pinot Noir Okanagan Valley Icewine (\$60) On January 20, 2002, an Arctic cold front swept into Canada's Okanagan Valley around midnight naturally freezing the Pinot Noir grapes. The precious few grapes that survived were hand harvested at 36 ° brix and pressed. 67 cases of an extremely rare wine were produced. More fruity than the Queer Eye Five.

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In my last newsletter I said that Pinot Noir was indigenous to France. However, other sources I have read state that Pinot Noir originated in the Nile region, where it developed from the *vitis vinifera occidentalis*. It was spread by the Greeks, and taken to France by the Romans.

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SF Chronicle Wine Competition

This prestigious annual wine competition was recently held in the Bay Area. 2,517 entries from 575 wineries were judged by members of the wine and food media, retail and industry trade, winemaking, wine education, and the restaurant, culinary, and hospitality vocations. A public tasting of the award-winning wines will take place on March 20, 1-5 PM at the AAA Club Level SBC Park, San Francisco.. For information and a complete listing of the winners go to www.winejudging.com. The sweepstakes and Best of Class winners are listed below.

Best Red Wine Sweepstakes Winner: **2002 Patz & Hall Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$33) (James Hall says, "There are no secrets to making great Pinot Noir—grow some great grapes, and then don't screw it up in the winery.") 3,900 cases. A blend of grapes from ten different vineyard sites in the Russian River Valley, Green Valley, and Sonoma Coast. Available at www.patzhall.com.

Gold, Best of Class, Pinot Noir \$13-20 **2000 Claudia Springs Mendocino Pinot Noir** (\$18) A very small producer with a tasting room in Boonville.

Double Gold, Best of Class, Pinot Noir \$20-30 **2002 Navarro Anderson Valley Methode Ancien Pinot Noir** (\$20). A consistently excellent wine for the money. Widely distributed and available at the winery.

Other notable Gold Winners: 2001 Brophy Clark Santa Maria Valley (\$20), 2001 Davis Family Russian River Valley (\$30), 2001 Handley Cellars Anderson Valley (\$23), 2001 Holdredge Russian River Valley (\$30), 2001 Casa Cassara Winery & Vineyard Burning Creek Vineyard (\$46), 2001 Domaine Alfred Edna Valley Chiasmal Vineyard (\$42), 2000 Domaine Carneros The Famous Gate Carneros (\$45), 2000 Esterlina Anderson Valley (\$30), 2001 Foley Estates Barrel Select (\$50), 2001 Foley Estates Santa Rita Hills (\$32), 2001 Papapietro Perry Russian River Valley (\$38), 2001 Robert Mondavi Reserve Napa Valley (\$50), 2000 Russian Hill Leras Vineyard (\$38), and 2001 Woodenhead Elk Prarie Vineyard Humboldt (\$42). (All prices are full retail).



So You Want To Be a Wine Reviewer?

A new service allows consumers to rate wines like the experts. "The Wine Verdict" is available through the website www.wineandchocolates.com. Amateur wine reviewers can submit their own detailed wine reviews including a score based on the traditional 100 point rating system. The reviews can be read by other wine enthusiasts worldwide, allowing consumers to compare what others are saying about a particular wine. A personal wine journal is created for each reviewer.

Many people depend on the personal opinion of friends, family, and other wine lovers before spending money on wine. "The Wine Verdict" gives wine consumers the service that can help them in properly choosing wines to purchase. The service is free of cost. I remain skeptical that enough consumers will take the time to post a significant volume of reviews to make this service worthwhile.



Roessler Pinot Noir

While attending the recent World of Pinot Noir, I had the pleasure of meeting Roger Roessler, founder of Roessler Cellars. I had seen a brief and favorable review of one of the 2002 Roessler releases in the *Wine Spectator* and was glad to find out the history behind the relatively new producer.

Roger spent many years in the restaurant business and had a keen interest in wine. In 1999, he purchased a small parcel of land in Sonoma with a restaurant on it. He was planning on operating the restaurant while planting some grapes on the adjoining land and possibly even making some wine. Discouraged by the inability to expand the restaurant due to local codes, he decided to buy some Pinot Noir grapes from his friends, the Sangiacomos, and

begin to produce single vineyard designated wines. From its humble beginnings of 225 cases of Pinot Noir harvested in the 2000 vintage, Roessler Cellars has quickly grown to 3,000 cases of single vineyard wines from five producers in 2002. With a primary interest in Pinot Noir, Roger's goal is to grow to 5,000 cases.

Founder Roger has been joined by his brother Richard Roessler. They have been fortunate to have the talented Wells Guthrie as winemaker. Guthrie is the winemaker and part owner of Copain Cellars where he has produced single vineyard designated Pinot Noirs from Anderson Valley. His background includes stints at Chapoutier in the Rhone region of France, with Helen Turley at Martinelli Winery, and also with Erin Jordan at Turley.

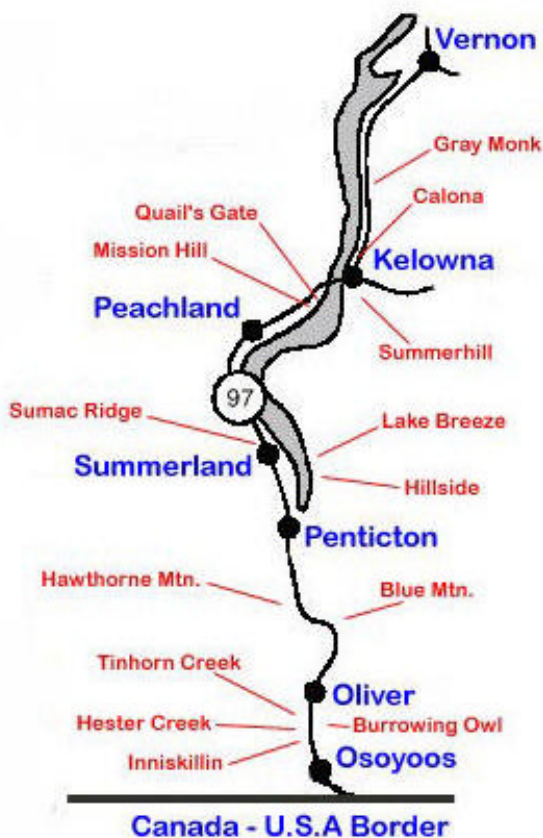
An estate vineyard was planted in August, 2003 in the Sonoma Coast appellation near Annapolis. The wine is made at a custom crush facility in Santa Rosa.

2002 Pinot Noir Releases: **Sangiaco** Vineyard Carneros, **Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley**, **Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley**, **Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands**, **Sonoma County Blend**, and **BlueJay Anderson Valley Blend**. Prices are in the \$28– \$50 range.

2003 Pinot Noirs To Be Released: **Sangiaco**, **Dutton Ranch**, **Pisoni Vineyard**, **Peay Vineyard Sonoma Coast**, **Gold Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast**, and **Martinelli**.

This is an impressive Pinot Noir lineup. Already showing great promise, I suspect these quality wines to improve with each vintage. Visit the impressive website at www.roesslercellars.com to order or call Roger at 707-568-5106. He is a terrific guy to talk Pinot with.





New Releases:

2001 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$48)

**2000 Domaine Serene Mark Bradford Vineyard
Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$75)**

2002 Dierberg Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir

**2000 Saxon Brown Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
(\$30)**

**2002 Rusack Santa Rita Hills Reserve Pinot Noir
(\$32)**

2001 Scherrer Fort Ross Reserve Pinot Noir (\$42)

**2002 Pisoni Gary's Vineyard Pinor Noir, 2002
Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**

< Okanagan Valley

**If You Drink No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

Stephen Ross Wine Cellars

Stephen Ross was chosen as Artisan Winery of the Year for *Wine & Spirits 2004 Buying Guide*. Winemaker Stephen Ross Dooley is a quiet, obscure, unprepossessing sole who makes great wines. His background includes a winemaking stint at Chalone-owned Edna Valley. His **2001 Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir** was probably the best Pinot Noir to come from that vineyard in the 2001 vintage.

The wines are made at Courtside Cellars in San Luis Obispo, a custom crush state-of-the-art winemaking facility. The first of the 2002 red wines to be released is the **2002 Central Coast Pinot Noir**. It is a blend of Edna Ranch (Edna Valley) and Bien Nacido Vineyard (Santa Maria Valley). The Edna Valley is only 30 miles north of the Santa Maria Valley, and although the climate and geography is similar, the terroir is quite different. Blending from these two areas produced a stunning Pinot Noir in the 2002 vintage. 292 cases released.

The *Adopt-A-Barrel* program at Stephen Ross is unique. The 2003 vintage is currently being offered. The program allows consumers to purchase two cases of wine of choice at low futures prices. In addition, participants receive two invitations to the gourmet feast - Barrel Adopters Dinner - on April 23, 2005, an invitation to barrel and bottle taste at the winery on July 24, 2004, and the opportunity to purchase at 33% of retail Stephen Ross wines as they are released. The cost of the program is \$585 before June 1, 2004. Registration is available by phone at 805-594-1318 or online at www.stephenross.com.

