

# PinotFile<sup>©</sup>

The FIRST Wine Newsletter Devoted Exclusively to Pinot Noir

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## Pinot Favors Selected Cool Climates

Since Pinot Noir buds early and ripens early, the longer it hangs on the vine, the better the acidity and the more complex the aromas and flavors. Marine-influenced cool climates that are temperate, foggy, and blessed with ocean breezes allow extended hang times for Pinot Noir and bring out the beauty and elegance of this temperamental goddess.

In California, the cool appellations most suitable for growing Pinot Noir have only recently been well-defined. The last two decades have seen an astonishingly rapid discovery process in which eager pioneers have found hilltop vistas and areas with brisk coastal breezes appropriate for corralling the charm and beauty of the Pinot Noir grape. From south to north these appellations include:

Santa Rita Hills, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Maria Valley in Santa Barbara County; Arroyo Grande Valley (westend), Edna Valley in San Luis Obispo County; Chalone and Mt Harlan in the Central Coast; Santa Lucia Highlands in Monterey County; Santa Cruz Mtns (selected ridgetops); Marin County (western); Carneros, Russian River Valley, Grass Valley, Sonoma Coast in Sonoma County; Anderson Valley in Mendocino County.

Smaller plantings and less-typical sites in California include: Alexander Valley, Arroyo Seco (Monterey), Knights Valley, Livermore Valley, Paso Robles, Redwood Valley (Mendocino), Sierra Foothills, Solano County Green Valley, Sonoma Mountain, Spring Mountain District, Sonoma Valley, Dry Creek Valley, Humboldt County, San Benito County, Santa Clara Valley, York Mountain, Yorkville Highlands, and Yountville.

Pinot Noir is also widely planted throughout the United States. Besides the Willamette Valley and Umpqua Valley of Oregon, appellations growing Pinot Noir include: Central Delaware Valley, Lake Erie, Lake Michigan Shore, Long Island, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, North Fork of Long Island, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Colorado, Finger Lakes, Hamptons, Long Island, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Virginia, Washington (Yakima Valley, Walla Walla), and the Western Connecticut Highlands.

Our neighbors to the north in Canada have plantings in these appellations: British Columbia, Niagara Peninsula, Okanagan Valley, Ontario, Similkameen Valley, and Vancouver Island,

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

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“There is nothing quite as satisfying as succeeding with Pinot Noir. It is the most responsive, delicate, fickle, fragile grape to work with— and I’m hooked on it”

Lane Tanner, Pinot Noir specialist

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## Copeland Creek Pinot Noir is Sublime

**Pfendler Vineyards** is the work of vineyard owner Peter Pfendler and winemaker Don Baumhefner. The first Sonoma Coast vineyards were planted in 1992, with the 6 acre Pinot Noir vineyard (Copeland Creek) in 1998. This Pinot Noir vineyard has ideal terroir with rocky, well-drained soils, morning fog, and afternoon breezes that drift in from the Sonoma Coast to cool down the grapes for extended maturation. Located near the town of Penngrove, near Petaluma, it is in the path of the fog that comes in directly from the ocean through the Petaluma Gap (aerial maps have shown that 80% of the fog that cools off the Russian River Valley comes in through the gap instead of through the Russian River). Next year an additional 2.4 acres of Pinot Noir will be planted on the estate.



Don has been making wine for thirty years. He started out working with the legendary winemaker Joseph Swan. At the same time, he opened several wine bars in the San Francisco Bay area and in 1980 set up the wine program at John Ash & Co Restaurant in Santa Rosa. Here he worked as a sommelier and initiated an innovative program of offering many fine wines by the glass. He continues to lead wine tasting classes, evaluates cellars, and consults with businesses and private investors regarding many aspect of the wine industry.

The **2001 Copeland Creek Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** is the inaugural release from this new vineyard. It is planted exclusively to clones 114, 115, 777, 828, as well as the Joseph Swan clone. Don believes that clonal selection is, by far, the most important single factor in the elevation of Pinot Noir “from the status of Cabernet’s weak stepsister to its rightful place as the king of wine.” The wine is made in Forestville at the Russian River Winery where several small producers (including Dutton Goldfield) also make their wines. This Pinot Noir is elegant and refined, not overblown (alcohol is 13.3%). In a blind tasting, Volnaysians would have a hard time picking this one out from their own. A nice impression of luxury for a young-vines Pinot Noir, Don says the 2002 and 2003 are even better, but I was quite happy with the 2001. 336 cases produced, \$30 (10% discount on 1/2 case, 15% discount on a full case— very sensible). The wine is on the wine list at Chez Panisse and served by the glass at the Zuni Café and Plumpjack Café— enough said. [www.happylabwine.com](http://www.happylabwine.com)

## QRW’s California Best of The Best

More than 700 wines were blind tasted for QRW’s 20th Annual Best of The Best in California. The emphasis here is on wines you can actually buy— not “trophy” wines that are often unavailable or grossly overpriced.

Best of The Best & Best of Show: **2001 Rodney Strong Reserve Jane’s Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$30)

5 Star Wines (in a class by themselves): **2001 Laetitia La Colline Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir** (\$60) and **2002 Sebastiani Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$10).

4 Star Wines (exemplary, benchmarks of their type): **2001 Acacia St Clair Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir** (\$50), **2001 Cosentino Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$34), **2001 Consilience Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** (\$30), **2000 Foley Santa Maria Hills Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$38), **2001 Handley Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (\$25), **2001 Sanford Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$26) and **2001 Sanford Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$43), and **2001 Valley of the Moon Carneros Pinot Noir** (\$20).

## Gypsy Dancer Cellars

Gypsy Dancer Cellars is the latest winery project for Gary Andrus, who founded Pine Ridge Winery in the Napa Valley (he retired as CEO last year) and Archery Summit in Oregon. He now resides in Oregon with his new wife Christine and their young baby daughter Gypsy. In the summer of 2002, Andrus was planning on moving back to Oregon and when he discovered the Lion Valley Vineyards in Cornelius, Oregon, he knew that was where he wanted to start a small “mom and pop” winery. The property has 40 acres in vines— nine planted in 2002 and nine in the summer of 2003 by Andrus. The former owner of the Lion Valley Vineyard property was David Levinthal, a software engineer for Intel. He had purchased the land in 1991, but found trying to work a full-time job and run a winery by himself was nearly impossible. Also, Levinthal had learned his wine-making skills in France and quickly found that the American palette was quite different from what he wanted to produce. He tried to structure his wines to age, but the lack of fruit-forwardness in his Pinot Noirs was not favorably received by the wine press.



Two Pinot Noirs were released by Gypsy Dancer Cellars from the 2002 vintage:

**Gypsy Dancer A&G Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir 2002** (\$60). This vineyard is owned by friends of Andrus and is located in the Red Hills of Dundee. It was planted in 1998 to clones 777,115,667, and Pommard. The wine is a heavyweight reminiscent of the fruit bombs he produced at Archery Summit. There is a heavy dose of spicy black fruit typical of the Red Hills. This wine could easily be cellared for 6-7 years.

**Gypsy Dancer Premier Cuvee Gary & Christine's Vineyard Pinot Noir 2002** (\$30). This wine is the first release from estate fruit. A more approachable Pinot Noir than the A&G, this wine has loads of irresistible fruit, seductive spice, and a very long finish. At Wimbledon they would say this wine is “spot on”. Both wines available at [avalonwines.com](http://avalonwines.com) and the Wine Club.

The Premier Cuvee is the first of the “Pinot Noir Trilogies” from Gary Andrus. He also owns vineyard property in New Zealand and plans to commute there several times a year to produce a premium Pinot Noir. He feels that by proper clonal selection and rootstock, he can improve the quality of Pinot Noirs emerging from New Zealand. The New Zealand Winery will be called Christine Loraine, after his wife, and will be available in the United States next year. He also plans a third Pinot Noir release from property he owns in Carneros.

## What's in YOUR Wine Cellar?

A new feature of the PinotFile will be profiling reader's wine cellars. Every wine enthusiast loves to be a wine voyeur and check out what fellow enthusiasts are buying and cellaring. MC of San Clemente, California agreed to be the first.

MC cellars about 22 cases of California Pinot Noir and 2 cases of Burgundy (mainly 1990 vintage). At 2-3 bottles a week, he has a 2-3 year supply. His drinking window for domestic Pinot Noir is 3-5 years of age. He has Williams Selyem (1995-2001), Lynmar (1997 including magnums, and 1999 including the Five Sisters bottling), Rochioli (both Estate and Single Vineyard releases from 1997-2001), DuMol (1998-2001 including 2000 and 2001 Finn), Merry Edwards (1999-2001, all releases), Siduri (2001, all releases), Testarossa (2001), and Brewer-Clifton (2002, one bottle of all four releases). Odds and ends include wines from Flowers, Gary Farrell, Scherrer, and Acacia. A cellar queen includes one bottle of Regnum Spaetburgunder-Baden 1999 that he purchased for \$26.



  
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**“The flavors of the great red Burgundies are sensuous, often erotic, above rational discourse and beyond the measures of criticism as they flout the conventions in favor of something rooted in emotions and passions too powerful to be taught, too ancient to be meddled with.”**

**Oz Clarke, noted wine writer.**

## My Wine Epiphany

Another new feature of the PinotFile will be to offer periodically the story of various winery owner's and wine-maker's wine epiphanies. The dictionary defines an epiphany as “a moment of profound insight”. In wine-related terms, it is a wine drinking revelation that transforms one's appreciation of wine from the ordinary into an often lifelong love and enthusiasm for the grape. Almost religious in nature, it transcends the boundaries of normal taste.

Joseph Davis, well-known Pinot Noir and Chardonnay producer (Morgan, Arcadian), agreed to share his wine epiphany. His experience was one that changed the course of his life twenty years ago and has remained a benchmark throughout his career. As a college student working his way through school, I took a job in a wine shop selling wine. During the second year I was given a bottle of wine by a client who frequently purchased sought-after labels of the day from me. He had offered this bottle as a thank you during the holidays in December of 1982 and I had suggested that he stick around and share it with me and my colleagues on the floor.

For me it was a levitating experience that gave way to a synaptic thought: what a great life pursuit to recreate for others this very experience I was having at that moment. I thought at the time that it was the most delicious thing I had ever tasted. And to this day, the taste remains fresh in my mind. It has become the benchmark for which I measure all my own wines.

I have tasted this wine only twice in my life. The second time was in the cellar of the gentleman who produced it and it was after I had been working as a winemaker for some time. It was just as ethereal as the first time and perhaps even a greater experience because I was sipping it in the cellar where it had been produced with the man who produced it. The wine was the Domaine Dujac 1978 Clos de la Roche.

Epilogue: In November of 2003, acting in the capacity of Honorary Chairman for Magic Moments (a foundation that raises funds for terminally-ill children) in Birmingham, Alabama, I was asked to the podium to receive a gift as a thank you for my efforts. Presented to me was a gift from the man I had so long admired and had studied with: one pristine bottle directly from his cellar of 1978 Clos de la Roche. Thank you Jacques Seyesse. This has become the symbol that will be passed on to my children as an inspiration to them to reach higher in their pursuit as winegrowers.