

# PinotFile<sup>©</sup>

The FIRST Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

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## Fair Dinkum Pinot Noir

Aussie Pinot Noirs have never garnered much attention with the popularity of the country's Shiraz and stickies. However, there are several small producers in the southern Victoria region of Australia that have found the right cool-climate terroir to produce Pinot Noirs that are *bonzers* (great, ripper). Three of the best are highlighted here.

Phillip Jones retired in the late 1970's to handcraft tiny amounts of Pinot Noir in South Gippsland, Victoria (see map page 2). Named after early explorers of the region, George Bass and Arthur Phillips, **Bass Phillip** is close to the sea, but far enough inland to provide an ideal climate for growing Pinot Noir. With a very low cropped dry-farmed vineyard (four times the average Australian vineyard planting density) yielding less than 1 ton to the acre, production is limited to a few hundred cases a year. Jones is a fanatic about fruit quality, hand-sorting individual bunches and discarding up to 30% of substandard fruit in some years. The winery is gravity-fed, the winemaking process holistic with minimal additives, natural yeasts, and no filtration. The resultant wines have no equal in Australia. The current releases include a **2001 Pinot Noir**, a **2001 Reserve Pinot Noir**, and a **2001 Premium Pinot Noir** (all cost *big bikkies*). Steve Tanzer couldn't say enough good things about the 2001 wines (PN 91, Reserve PN 97, Premium PN 96). James Halliday raved, "In style they are akin to the best wines of Vosne-Romanee, and will be very long-lived." In the early 90's I bought several bottles of the Premium releases for ridiculous prices (\$30-35) from Brown Derby in Missouri and at that time I thought they were *Ace!* (excellent). The winery is owned by Old Bridge Cellars, who also own several notable Australian wineries such as d'Arenberg, Leeuwin Estate, and Yarra Yering. The wine is very difficult to find: Old Bridge Cellars Napa office can be reached at 800-622-2234. Australian sources on the internet that export include cellarit.com and winestar.com.

An influential wine critic in Australia, Jeremy Oliver, is excited over the potential of **Kooyong**, a new Pinot Noir producer in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula region (see map page 2). In a recent issue of *Vinifera Bi-Weekly* (edited by Andy Tan, a wine distributor based in Singapore), Oliver said, "This estate is the most exciting winemaking development to occur in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula region for more than a decade." Kooyong is the largest new entrant in this region. The first vintage, 1999, produced only 1,000 cases, but with a large on-site winery, 10,000 cases are planned

**PEE-no-NWAH  
in French  
PEE-no-NWAR  
in American**

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James Halliday on Bass Phillips: "Tiny quantities of some of the most exciting Pinot Noir to be made in Australia came onto the market in late 1990. The wines have tremendous concentration of flavor, power, and length, yet retain the essence of Pinot Noir's varietal character."

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for the future. Owners Chris and Gail Aylword have planted 32 ha to vines on the 93 ha property. 2/3 of the vineyard is Pinot Noir (8 different clones) and 1/3 to Chardonnay (10 different clones). The winemaker, Sandro Mosele, is a top-notch winemaker who consults with several Australian wineries including Moondarra (see next paragraph). Recently, Mosele identified certain vineyard blocks that had enough unique identity that he bottled them separately as SVS (Single-Vineyard Series). The Pinot Noir SVS was the **2001 Kooyong Haven Pinot Noir**. The wine is described as “non-Australian-like” and with “classic black cherries with cherry-syrup-like ripeness with the overall purity and mineral quality reminiscent of Chambolle Musigny from Burgundy. This is a Pinot Noir you can *drink with the flies* (drink alone).

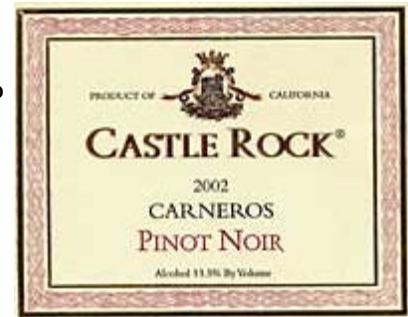
Melbourne Sommelier Neil Prentice and his family established **Moondarra Vineyard** in Gippsland, Victoria (see map). The vineyard is planted densely to 11 low-yielding clones of Pinot Noir and is non-irrigated. The vines are stressed by low rainfall. Ultimately farming will be bio-dynamic. Moondarra utilizes the Guy Accad technique of long cold maceration along with whole cluster fermentation and limited used of new oak so as to not detract from the intense fruit. The total production in 2001 was 400 cases, making it , along with Bass Phillip, the most difficult Aussie “cult” Pinot Noir to purchase. The **2001 Moondarra Terra Moorabool Pinot Noir** and the **2001 Moondarra Conception Pinot Noir** are exy (expensive). Andy Tan described the wine “as a hypothetical blend of Carneros Pinot Noir with its dark, black cherries and earth character, and an Oregon Pinot Noir with stalky, sappy, and cool-climate mineral and acid-vibrancy.”

The bright potential of southern Victoria Pinot Noir is here. You can keep apprised of the region by accessing Jeremy Oliver’s internet wine newsletter at onwine.com or Andy Tan’s wine newsletter (e-mail at vinifera@singnet.com.sg).



## Castle Rock Releases Reserve Pinot Noir

Greg Popovich (not the coach of the San Antonio Spurs) started Castle Rock in 1994 with the release of 2,400 cases of several varietals. This year, Castle Rock is expected to sell 150,000 cases of wine. Sales in 2003 increased 113% over 2002 and in the first half of 2004, sales are up 45% over 2003. The key to the success of Castle Rock is that they have been able to produce decent quality negociant wines at great prices. The wines have generally received favorable reviews. Winemaker August "Joe" Briggs directs the winemaking which is done in Napa. Recently the company released a **2003 Castle Rock Carneros Pinot Noir**, a **2003 Castle Rock Mendocino County Pinot Noir**, and the first "Reserve" wine, a **2003 Castle Rock Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**. The wines are widely available in food and wine retail stores and sell in the \$8-15 range.



## Silver Oak Pinot Noir??

Ray Duncan and family, who own Silver Oak, have started a new winery, **Twomey Cellars**, at the Soda Canyon Ranch in Napa Valley. The main effort of the new winery is to produce Merlot from a single vineyard here according to the Old World approach used for the classified growths of Bordeaux. Winemaker Daniel Baron spent considerable time at Petrus and other famous wineries in Pomerol and St. Emilion. The Merlot (\$60) has been well-reviewed since the inaugural 2000 release.

The winery also made a limited amount ( 300 cases) of **2001 Twomey Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**. This wine is not mentioned on the website and available for sale only at the winery tasting room which is at 1183 Dunaweal Lane in Calistoga (2 miles south of Calistoga at Hwy 29 and Dunaweal Lane). The wine was offered recently to the trade at a tasting of Silver Oak and Twomey wines at Fleming's Restaurant in Newport Beach, California. Although tasters were overwhelmed with the high quality of the Cabernets and Merlots, the sole Pinot Noir was very well received.

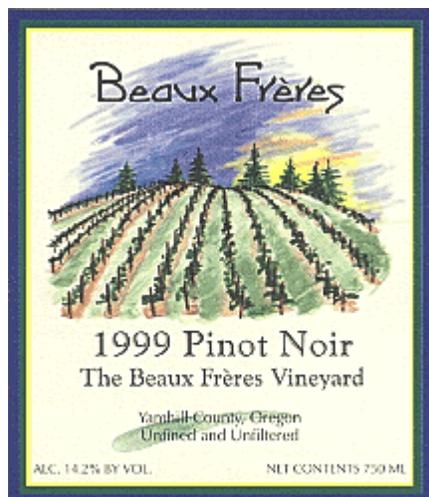
## MacPhail Leaves Fridges, Makes Pinot Noir

James MacPhail's family owned an appliance store in Sonoma for many years. A few years ago, he retired to Healdsburg and began making wine. Production is small and allocated.

**2002 MacPhail Toulouse Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$38). 345 cases. The vineyard is in the Anderson Valley. Winemaking is traditional with hand harvesting and sorting of the grapes, 100% destemmed, and aged in 100% French oak (65% new) for 10 months. The wine was very favorably reviewed by *Wine Spectator* and *California Grapevine*.

**2002 MacPhail Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$38). 60 cases. The same winemaking practices were employed here also. *California Grapevine* wrote, " medium to full-bodied, forward, plush, cherry fruit flavored with lingering aftertaste— an elegant wine which shows a lot of richness and depth with distinct varietal character."

The wines are scarce. Try [rootscellar.com](http://rootscellar.com) or other Sonoma County retailers.



## Privé Vineyard

With the internet bringing the planet quickly and closely together, I get e-mails from pinotphiles all over the world. Recently I heard from Hector J. Bocanegra in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. He suggested that I write a feature on **Privé Vineyard Pinot Noir**.

Owners Mark and Tina Hammond operate this “French style” boutique Pinot Noir winery that produces just 250 cases per year from an estate vineyard. The quality here comes from old vines, planted in 1980 on Chehalem Mountain. The wine is micro-crafted from hand inspection of every cluster to gentle and meticulous handling from fermentation to aging in all

French oak barrels. Two wines are produced: **Privé Vineyard le nord Yamhill County Pinot Noir** comes from the northern block of the vineyard. 25% new French oak allows the ‘terroir’ to show and makes the wine drinkable in the first few years after release. 165 cases. **Privé Vineyard le sud Yamhill County Pinot Noir** comes from the lower block of the vineyard. This wine holds up to 100% new French oak, and benefits from 3-8 years of cellaring. 85 cases.

Mr. Bocanegra writes that the Pinot Noirs are “Burgundian-styled Oregon wines that are exquisite. Nothing of an alcohol bomb, just pure terroir expression, elegance, balance, and finesse.”

The owners can be contacted in Newberg, Oregon at 503-554-0464. The mailing list is at [privevineyard@privevineyard.com](mailto:privevineyard@privevineyard.com).

**Beaux Freres is the most collectable, and arguably best, Oregon Pinot Noir producer. A partnership between Robert Parker and his brother-in-law Mike Etzel, the wines are not reviewed by Mr. Parker due to conflict of interest, but they are made to his tastes. Their 2002 Estate may be their best ever and was the highest scoring 2002 Oregon Pinot Noir in a recent issue of the *Wine Spectator* (95). Mr. Parker has gone on record as saying the 2002 Beaux Freres Pinot Noir Upper Terrace is his favorite of the 2002 vintage. Only about 1/3 as much of this wine was made as the regular Beaux Freres Estate Pinot Noir. A third release, the 2002 Beaux Freres Belles Soeurs Shea Vineyard was given 94 points by *Wine Spectator*.**

**The Upper Terrace is sold out at the winery. All three wines are available from [dparker@easystreet.com](mailto:dparker@easystreet.com) (Brentwood Wine Co). The Estate and Upper Terrace are \$419/6 pack and \$159 for 1.5 liter, the Belles Soeurs is \$299/6 pack and \$119 for 1.5 liter.**

