

PinotFile

The FIRST Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

Josh Jensen Spouts Off

Josh Jensen, owner of Calera Wine Company, came to winemaking after pursuing an education at Harvard and Oxford. Fascinated by French wines, he spent two years working the harvests in Burgundy and in the Rhone Valley. In 1972 he began to search for a site for growing Pinot Noir in California. He was sold on the necessity of soil that was thin with overlying limestone, like in the Cote d'Or. He ended up in the Gavilan Mountains near Hollister in 1974. A lime kiln had been built there around 1900 (calera is Spanish for lime kiln). He subsequently identified four microclimates and bottled Pinot Noir from each area individually— Jensen Vineyard, Reed Vineyard, Selleck Vineyard, and Mills Vineyard. Jensen was the winemaker for the early vintages starting in 1978. Steve Doerner then took over until leaving for Oregon in the early 1990's. The Pinot Noirs have been an adventure to taste, in some years such as 1985 and 1988 superb, and in others missing their mark. Nevertheless, Jensen has become a legend among fans of Pinot Noir in California and has been widely admired for his unwavering commitment to producing wines that best reflect his terroir without any condescending nods to the expectations of the commercial wine press. He has been, and is committed to the classic Burgundian style and uses it for a reference point for his wines.

Those of you on the mailing list recently received an inflammatory commentary by Josh Jensen titled "Blasters of the Universe, A Cautionary Tale", along with Calera's Fall wine offering. In this, the 30th harvest for Calera, Jensen speaks out about the winemaking trends that dominant today's wines. He says, "... ..the trend that has occurred over the last 30 years is toward a style I will call Blaster-Smasher Pinots: exceptionally dark, cloying, overblown sledgehammer wines that are unlike anything you could find in a wine shop 30 years ago. These present-day behemoths, which to me are cartoonish freaks, the Pamela Lee Andersons of the wine world, draw raves from all the U.S. publications nowadays, and are avidly sought by collectors here, and therefore, by the wine trade. These Smasher-Blasters, often called Fruit Bombs, are mostly one-dimensional, simple but potent beverages that will merely lose their fruit, their main if not their only appeal, with the passing years and just turn into...mud. Expensive mud. And dull, to boot. Many of the wineries making this style of wine are quite new to the game. I think of these new breed eager winemakers as the Blasters of the Universe, making their ultra-dark, mouth-exploding Pinots that burst through the old boundaries and seem to be trying to flex their muscles." Now that is speaking your mind. (cont'd)

If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir

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Calera Wine Company just released the 2000 Jensen Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$50), 2000 Reed Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$46), and 2000 Central Coast Pinot Noir (\$20— *Food & Wine* Best Pinot Noir \$20 and under). Unlike most wineries, Calera also offers older library wines such as 1994 Selleck Vineyard, 1995 Mills Vineyard, and 1997 Reed Vineyard. 831-637-9170, calerawine.com

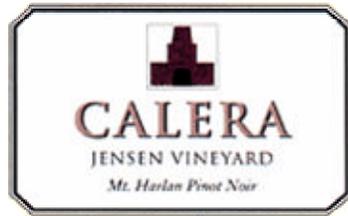
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Jensen goes on to say that these ultra-dark, fruit bombs are the result of 3 factors: (1) new Pinot Noir clones which ripen earlier and give fruitier wines, (2) cold soak prior to fermentation which increases the wine-skin contact time, extracting more color, and (3) blending in other grape varieties, particularly Syrah/Shiraz which makes the wine darker (blasphemy in Burgundy, but Jensen seems to imply this occurs here in the U.S.).

The point of Jensen's tale is to emphasize that Calera will stay true to its philosophy of growing and producing classic Burgundian-style wines from his unique vineyards.

In April of 2003, Robert Parker, jr., tasted through 64 of the single-vineyard Calera Pinot Noirs dating back to 1987. His notes were published in November, 2003, at eRobertParker.com. His general impression was that there were enough great wines to convince him that Calera was "one of the most compelling Pinot Noir specialists of not only the New World, but of Planet Earth."



New Pinot Noir Releases

Adrian Fog: Savoy Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir (\$75), and **Two Sisters Vineyard Russian River Valley 2003 Pinot Noir** (\$75). 707-4311190.

Casa Cassera Winery & Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Estate 2002 Pinot Noir.

Fire Station Red Russian River Valley 2003 Pinot Noir (refer to past issue of PinotFile for information).

Hamel Wines Sonoma Coast Campbell Ranch Annapolis 2003 Pinot Noir.

Inman Family Wines Olivet Grange Vineyard Russian River Valley 2003 Pinot Noir (see last issue of the PinotFile for information).

Loring Wine Company: Gary's Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir, Rosella's Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir, Brouseaud Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir, Cargasacchi Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir, Naylor Dry Hollow Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir, and California "The Llama" 2003 Pinot Noir. Loringwinco.com. Very hot producer and limited availability; sign up for the mailing list.

Martinelli Winery: Blue Slide Ridge Sonoma coast 2002 Pinot Noir, 450 cases, (\$75), **7 Mules Vineyard Russian River Valley 2002 Pinot Noir**, 395 cases, (\$50), **"Belle Vigna" Russian River Valley 2002 Pinot Noir**, (\$40), and **Reserve 2002 Pinot Noir**, (\$40). 707-5250570. Parker loves these wines and scored them highly. Limited to mailing list. Martinelliwinery.com

Merry Edwards: Russian River Valley 2002 Pinot Noir, (\$32), **Meredith Estate Vineyard 2002 Pinot Noir**, (Merry Edwards' own 22 acre vineyard, Swan, Mt. Eden, and Burgundy clones, *methode a l'Ancienne*, (\$48), and **Klopp Ranch Vineyard 2002 Pinot Noir**, (\$48). 707-8389950, merryedwards.com. Highly recommended wines from the "Queen of Pinot Noir".

Peterin Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands 2003 Pinot Noir

Siduri Wines: Sonoma County 2003 Pinot Noir, (\$19), **Pisoni Vineyard 2003 Pinot Noir**, (\$52), and **Clos Pepe Vineyard Santa Rita Hills 2003 Pinot Noir**, (\$52). The Pisoni and Clos Pepe are big, full-bodied, and rich-styled Pinot noirs. 707-578-3882.

Skewis: Floodgate Vineyard Anderson Valley 2002 Pinot noir, 175 cases, (\$45), **Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley 2002 Pinot Noir**, 200 cases. (\$35), **Bush Vineyard RRV 2002 Pinot Noir**, 165 cases, (\$42).

My Neighbor Opens New Oregon Winery

After a year of construction, Cardwell Hill Cellars opened in August, 2004, in Benton County, Oregon. Dan and Nancy Chapel bought 40 acres of overgrown vineyard property near the Marys River west of Philomath in 2000, then bought additional acreage nearby. They pulled out some Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc vines and replanted with Pinot Noir and a little Pinot Gris.

Dan used his years of experience in engineering as a CEO for Fluor Corporation to construct the 7,600 square-foot winery on the site. The property features a regal French chateau-style house overlooking the vineyard and sits on top of a subterranean wine cellar. The \$500,000 project will enable the Chapels to press, ferment, and bottle their own wine, which was previously produced from their grapes by LaVelle Vineyards in Elmira on a contract basis. The new winery is set up to use gravity flow, with the barrel room below the fermentation deck and crush pad. The steel structure has curved windows and wooden decks that provide views of the vineyard and surrounding hills and woods. It was styled by Corvallis architect Chick Gerke to complement the chateau, which he also designed.

I was walking home from playing tennis a few months ago when Dan called me into his house and proudly showed me the photographs of his beautiful chateau and winery. It was hard to believe that a neighbor in my residential area had embarked on a major project to produce Pinot noir. His first release, a 2002 Caldwell Hill Cellars Pinot Noir was priced nicely at \$20 and was a good example of the appeal of Oregon Pinot Noir— an abundance of juicy red fruits with a good dose of acid to carry the pleasure. For now, the Chapels will produce only Pinot Noir, but they plan to introduce a Pinot Gris next year. They hope to produce about 4,000 cases of wine by year 2008.

The winery is open by appointment for now, but the Chapels plan to build a 1,000 square-foot tasting room (an oddity in Oregon) scheduled to open to the public next Memorial Day. After that, the tasting room will be open to the public on a regular basis.

Caldwell Hill Cellars is at 24241 Cardwell Hill Drive in Wren, just north of U.S. highway 20. The phone number is 714-730-0608 (at their Santa Ana, California home) or 929-9463 (in Oregon). They plan to split their time between California and Oregon. Lucky for me, because I can walk down the block whenever the fancy strikes and pick up a bottle of Pinot for dinner.

More Good Health News for Manly Wine Drinkers

This week researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center reported that drinking four or more glasses of red wine a week reduces the risk of prostate cancer by 50%. In addition, red wine was found to have the greatest impact on the most aggressive, fast-spreading prostate tumors, leading to a 60% reduction in such cases. The study is the first to find that red wine could help men avoid prostate cancer. Published in the online version of the International Journal of Cancer, the study also found no increased risk of prostate cancer from drinking white wine, beer, or hard alcohol, but these forms of alcoholic drink did not reduce the incidence of prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among men in the United States, with 29,900 deaths expected to occur this year.

The most likely explanation for the anti-cancer benefit of red wine is a chemical called resveratrol, found in high amounts in the skin of red grapes (Pinot Noir grapes have the highest levels of resveratrol of all red grape varieties). Raspberries and peanuts also contain resveratrol, but not in the beneficial levels found in red wine. Resveratrol has also been shown to reduce the rates of lung, skin, and colon cancer in mice.




PrinceofPinot.com

Some winemakers reject the notion that high alcohol and ripeness in today's wines are either desirable or necessary. Ripe can be too ripe. Jim Clendenen, owner and winemaker at Santa Maria's Au Bon Climat, a winery specializing in Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, is one: "Hang time to allow a grapevine to come into balance is one thing, letting the grapes hang to achieve more flavor is a stylistic choice. Of course, wines have more flavor that way, but is it a better flavor? It's the question of whether you like fresh, just-picked raspberries or stewed, cooked raspberry coulis or raspberry candy. What you're tasting in those wines is simply more wetness and less acidity. Those wines don't go well with food, and they don't age. Bigness and obviousness have become the measure of greatness because of a couple of palates. We've been painted into a corner by the monolithic aspect of wine criticism, where the dictated style has been one to win blind tastings and not what best accompanies what you're having for dinner"

World of Pinot Noir 2005

The fifth annual World of Pinot Noir is scheduled for March 4-5, 2005 at the Cliffs Resort in Shell Beach, California. Over 120 Pinot Noir producers from around the world will be featured at this two day Pinot Noir experience that includes in-depth seminars, two grand tastings, a gala dinner, and a Santa Barbara-style Paulee. World of Pinot Noir 2002, held last March, was completely sold out well in advance, and based on feedback from that event, this year's event is expected to sell out even more quickly.

Friday morning, March 5, will kick off with Tasting Seminars at local wineries including one with Burghound Alan Meadows. The Pinot Noir Focus Tasting will be held on Friday afternoon at The Cliffs Resort overlooking the Pacific Ocean with over 50 participating wineries and gourmet wine-and-food pairings. Friday night is the Pinot Noir Gala Dinner that will feature outstanding chefs who came from France to excel on California's Central Coast. The dinner extravaganza will be hosted by participating wineries and sommeliers from around the world. Saturday's schedule begins with a tasting of The Wines of Domaine Comte Georges de Vogue, led by Jean-Luc-Pepin. That afternoon, the Pinot Noir by the Sea Tasting returns with more than 60 participating wineries, along with light hors d'oeuvres, artisan cheeses, and a silent auction of rare Pinot Noir magnums. A Santa Barbara style Paulee hosted by Au Bon Climat Winery will conclude the festivities on Saturday evening. This event is inspired by the Burgundian tradition that celebrates the end of harvest.

Attendance for World of Pinot Noir 2005 is extremely limited to insure an intimate tone. Attendees may purchase a "Two Day Passport" which includes a selection of seminars, tasting, and dinners over the course of the event. "One Day" passes for Friday and Saturday are also available. For registration, contact World of Pinot Noir, 805-4891758, or visit www.wopn.com.