

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

Tough Enough to Drink Pink?

Rosé sparkling wines and Champagnes are the perfect accompaniment to Christmas dinner and New Year's festivities. The elegant pink color combined with the refreshing acidity and palate-cleansing bubbles make any holiday event *tres couture*. And Dude, pink is actually in. Pink shirts and accessories are the thing for men this Spring as well as for the ladies.

Now some people think rosés are made out of rose petals. So to set them and others straight, here is the truth. With regard to French Champagnes, a "Blanc de Noirs" is made from the red grape varieties Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. It is pale or light gold in color and is a superior all-purpose food sparkler. A Rosé Champagne is made from blending a red still wine (Pinot Noir from Bouzy) into the white still wine (this technique of blending white still wine and a red still wine together to make rosé is permitted in France only in the Champagne region). Rosé Champagne can also be produced by leaving the red grape skins in contact with the must for a short period of time to absorb color. As a result, rosés have a deep pink color, are more full-bodied and fruity, but still very dry. The best California rosé sparkling wines are produced by the French *méthode champenoise* (May-TOAD shanh-peh-NWAZ) process which is more laborious and expensive. Almost all great American rosé sparkling wines are priced to reflect the expense of this method and the high cost of good Pinot Noir grapes. The term Brut on a Champagne or sparkling wine refers to the sugar in the wine with Brut having less than 15g of sugar/liter (very dry).

Here are some American sparkling rosés that the Prince recommends:

Etiolle Brut Rosé (Domaine Chandon) (\$35) Orange County Fair Gold "Best of Show." The best that Anderson Valley can offer.

J Wine Co Brut Rosé (\$25) A new, limited release from multiple vintages
Schramsberg Brut Rosé 2001 (\$35) Made from primarily Pinot Noir and always one of California's best sparkling rosés.

Iron Horse Brut Rosé 1998 (\$30) "puro Californiano"

Soter Brut Rosé Yamhill County 1999 (\$40) This sparkler is one of the few made in Oregon (they don't sell) and Oregon's best. Tony Soter (of Etude fame) produces this at his new Beacon Hill Winery in the Willamette Valley. My favorite.

Argyle Brut Rosé Cuvee Limited (\$25) Another top sparkler from the Willamette Valley producer who has made a name with Oregon bubbles.

If You Drink
No Blanc de
Noir, you Pinot
Blanc de Noir

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When you want to chill a bottle of sparkling wine, don't put it in the freezer unless you set a timer because after 15 minutes, it can freeze and explode. If you need to chill your sparkling wine quickly, put it into an ice-filled bucket with water and it will be ready in twenty minutes.

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Required Reading For the Pinotphile

Every serious pinotphile needs to keep up-to-date. The following books are required reading.

North American Pinot Noir John Winthrop Haeger, Univ of Calif Press, 2004, \$35, Hard Cover. The most comprehensive book on domestic Pinot Noir. A bible of pinotphilia.

The Heartbreak Grape: A California Winemaker's Search for the Perfect Pinot Noir Marq de Villiers, Harper Collins, 1994, \$23, Hard Cover. The trials and tribulations of Josh Jensen in his pursuit of the best California Pinot Noir in the Burgundy mold at Calera Winery.

A Fool and Forty Acres (Conjuring a Vineyard Three Thousand Miles from Burgundy) Geoff Heinricks, McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2004, \$35, Hard Cover. An evocative and highly engaging account of leaving behind the city (Toronto), and learning to love the trials and earthly pleasures of establishing a Pinot Noir vineyard in a near-forgotten corner of Canada.

New California Wine: Making Sense of Napa Valley, Sonoma, Central Coast, & Beyond Running Press, 2004, \$25, Hard Cover. A guide to understanding and appreciating the development of California viticulture written by one of America's most respected wine writers and wine critics.

Burgundy and It's Wines Nicolas Faith, Duncan Baird, 2002, \$40, \$40. Beautiful photographs of Burgundy highlight this portrait of Burgundy's culture, history, landscapes, people, foods, and, above all, wines.

The Great Domains of Burgundy Remington Norman, 2nd Ed, Kyle Cathie Limited, 1998, \$80, Hard Cover. The authoritative reference on Burgundy. A bit outdated now but a plethora of information on Burgundy.

Mountain Vines, Mountain Wines: Exploring the Wineries of the Santa Cruz Mountains, Casey Young, Mountain Vines Publishing, 2003, \$22, Hard Cover. The first book covering wineries of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The stories behind 50 wineries of the region are detailed along with beautiful photographs.

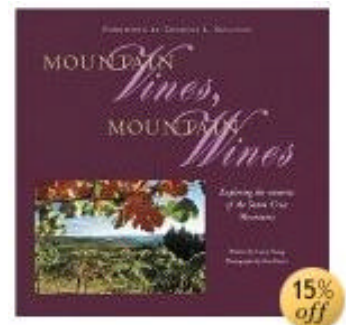
Wines of the Pacific Northwest. A Contemporary Guide to the Wines of Washington and Oregon Mitchell Beazley and Lisa Shara Hall, Octopus Publishing Group, 2001, \$40, Hard Cover. The first book to be dedicated to the region's history, wine laws, terroir, viticulture, vinification, and producers.

The Wineries of British Columbia John Schreiner, Whitecap, \$23. Interesting tales of the characters behind Okanagan Valley wineries and beyond. Winery addresses, phone numbers, winery hours, and a description of wines offered.

Sideways Rex Pickett, St. Martin's Griffin, 2004, \$14, Soft Cover. The story of two friends at a crossroads in their lives, going off for the last time to steep themselves in everything that makes it good to be young, male, and single: Pinot, putting, and bar-hopping. The movie version has received many "Best Movie" awards.

Inspiring Thirst: Vintage Selections for the Kermit Lynch Wine Brochure Kermit Lynch. One of the world's most revered wine merchants and importers, Kermit Lynch changed the way Americans drink wine and the way the French make it. In this book, Lynch presents the best of his engaging, highly personal accounts of winemakers and their rare potions. A thirst-inspiring treat for wine lovers. "Sideways, The Map" showing all of the wineries and sites in the movie can be downloaded free at www.santabarbaraCA.com.

Chalone: A Journey on Wine Frontier Greg S Walter and W Phillip Woodward, Carneros Press, 2000, \$17, Soft Cover. The history of a place and the interesting people who took up residence there as well as the personal recollections of Phillip Woodward, the co-founder of the modern Chalone Winery.

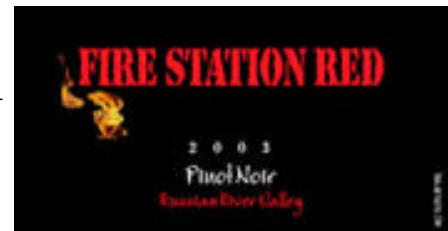


Fire Station Red Pinot Noir— Join the Brigade

This unique wine program supports firefighters and their many associated causes. John Drady, a firefighter and vintner in western Sonoma County along with partner and winemaker, Anthony Austin, decided during harvest of 2001 to do a limited bottling of wine that would salute the Gold Ridge firefighters (based in the heart of Sonoma's wine country) as well as firefighters everywhere. Initially the plan was to sell the wine locally, but word spread like "wildfire" and before long people all over the country were buying the wine in support of the cause. After this initial release of 400 cases of Fire Station Red Shiraz, the partners joined with Russian River Valley winegrower Fred Nunes, a retired firefighting helicopter pilot turned viticulturalist and planted 35 acres of Pinot Noir on a former ranch site that had been in the Nunes' family for generations.

The **2003 Fire Station Red Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** has been released. The wine was produced from select lots of fruit from Fred Nunes's favorite areas of the vineyard. On the back of the bottle is a photo of Fred doing a water drop on a wildland fire— surely the only Pinot Noir on the planet with a helitack shot on the bottle. The wine can be ordered at firestationred.com.

The Bottle Brigade Wine Club sounds like a great way for wine lovers to celebrate good food, good wine, fellowship, and support fire services across the country. When you join the Brigade you can attend members-only events including an annual barbecue, chance to purchase limited edition wines, 20% savings on logo-wear and 10% savings on wine purchases, and free shipping on all purchases. Visit the website to join.



Polymeal Diet Can Extend Life

Using a computer model of the American adult population, a research paper published in the *British Medical Journal*, calculated that followers of the so-called Polymeal diet could decrease their risk of heart disease by 76%, and increase the life expectancy for woman by five years and for men by 6.6 years compared to those that did not follow the diet. The Polymeal diet proposed in the study comprises fish, eaten four times a week, wine (15 centiliters a day), dark chocolate (100 g a day), fruit and vegetables (400 g a day), garlic (2.7 g a day) and almonds (68 g a day). The authors suggest that the Polymeal diet is a tastier and safer alternative to a proposed Polypill containing specific components known to combat cholesterol and other potential causes of heart disease. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Western populations.

Gadgets

The Pek Wine Steward Preservation System preserves and stores individual bottles of wine at the perfect temperature, eliminating the unappealing prospect of discarding the unused portion of a costly Pinot. The Pek Wine Steward uses replaceable cartridges to fill a wine bottle's air space with high-purity argon gas thus removing oxygen from the bottle and preventing oxidation. The device is the brainchild of engineer Gregory Luzaich who lives in Northern California's Sonoma wine country. The suggested price is \$229.95. Visit www.peksystems.com for more information.

The StemGrip is the first wineglass accessory that allows Riedel and similar crystal glasses to be safely washed in the dishwasher. Manufactured by a Redmond, Washington Company, each StemGrip holds four glasses safely. Suggested price is \$13. Order at www.stemgrip.com.

A Chemist Looks at Pinot Noir

- ?? PN+ is the symbol for the element Pinot Noir
- ?? Pinot Noir has an atomic weight of 24 Brix
- ?? Pinot Noir was possibly first discovered as early as 5th Century BC
- ?? Pinot Noir's original name was *pynos* or *pineau*
- ?? Attempts to reproduce this element in the lab have been unsuccessful
- ?? Pinot Noir is the parent element of Chardonnay, Gamay, Aligote, Melon, Auxerois, and others. The other parent is Gouais (a white varietal now nearly extinct)
- ?? Pinot Noir is often found in combination with ahi tuna, salmon, duck, and mushrooms
- ?? Some of the compounds featuring this element are: Champagne, Rosès
- ?? Lovers of this element are almost always converts from a devotion to another element (often CS)



Chilean Carmenère Similar to Pinot Noir

Carmenère is an offbeat wine grape unique to Chile. It was brought from Bordeaux, France in the late 19th century. Used as an important blending grape in the Medoc region, the variety was abandoned following the outbreak of Phylloxera in the 1860s. In 1994, French leaf expert Jean Michel Bourisquot identified Carmenère vines as being the lost variety. Inter-planted throughout Chile, the grape had been mistaken as a different strain of Merlot. The grape is prone to fruit-set difficulties and requires well-drained soils and intensive canopy management to decrease vigor, the grape's trademark. If not allowed to develop long enough, the wines made with this grape have vegetal characteristics and not enough acidity.

Carmenère shares some varietal characteristics with Pinot Noir in that it is softly textured, medium-bodied, showing spice, juicy red fruits (cherry, raspberry, plum, and cranberry), coffee, chocolate, and earth with various levels of oak and soft tannins. Carmenère can be an outstanding wine with beautiful color and layers of complexity. It is a readily accessible wine that is food-friendly. Like Pinot Noir, good matches include turkey, beef, lamb, pork, in combination with tomatoes, eggplant, onions, mushrooms, and garlic.

Chile has a fast-growing wine industry as it shifts its focus from quantity to quality. The thrust of the marketing is now to feature premium-bottled wines with denomination of origin, in the mid-to high-price range (the average price of Chilean bottled wine is \$23, but the goal is to push this closer to \$30). Reasonable land and labor costs keep production expenses low, so wineries can offer outstanding wine quality at value prices. Chilean wineries are employing more modern technology in their viticulture and vinification methods.

Carmenère is not easy to find in retail stores or restaurants, but it is worth the search. Labels to look for include: Baron Phillippe de Rothschild, Concha y Toro (top Chilean exporter), La Playa Estate, Santa Ema, and Tarapaca. Prices here in California range from \$8 to \$30.