

# PinotFile<sup>®</sup>

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

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## Desperate House Wines

There has been considerable press and interest of late about marketing wines specifically targeted to women, what some refer to as “Cinderella wines” or “girlie wines”. The underlying reasons for this trend are many, but include the fact that women purchase and drink more than half of the wine in this country. A recent Wine Market Council survey in the US showed that 54% of buyers of high-end wine (over \$15) are women. Their approach to wine is generally different from men in that they don’t look at wine as a fetish and don’t give two hoots about scores. Women are interested in enjoying wine as part of a social and often romantic experience and have little interest in collecting it. Shoes yes, wine no. There is some science involved also. Women metabolize alcohol more slowly so alcohol affects women more. Dr. Charles H. Halsted, a professor of medicine at UC Davis, studies the medical effects of alcohol. He notes that when a man drinks, 30 percent of the alcohol is eliminated in his stomach, but for women only 10 percent metabolizes, resulting in a higher blood level of alcohol. Every man who has dreamed of seducing a woman realizes that a couple glasses of wine can make the success more probable. Author George A. LaMarca, in his latest book, *Wine Wisdom*, states that “... ..wine has an immortal role in the seducing, loving, marrying, and losing of a woman by a man. History, if not our own experience, tells us that men indiscriminately use wine not only to help lure women, but also as solace for losing them.”

The idea of wines specifically aimed at female consumption has created quite a controversy. Comments posted by women on the web-blog, *amuse-bouche.net* reflect this. “I just hate the utterly patronizing women-and-wine theme that seems to be spreading faster than bird flue in Hong Kong.” “Is it too terrible to say I hope this idea dies on the vine?” In reference to Beringer’s White Lie Early Season Chardonnay, “What’s that supposed to evoke? Womens’ wily ways? The little deceit you indulge in about it tasting decent.? It sounds like cheap perfume.” Kris Curran, of Curran Wines in the Santa Rita Hills says “I find it demeaning. It’s implying that women don’t have as sophisticated a palate.” Ann Colgin, owner of Colgin Cellars in St Helena, says she would find a male wine “a little silly.” I really believe that the issue should not be debated so seriously. There is no question that many women are knowledgeable about wine, have discriminating taste, and find “girlie wines” a bit pandering. But for many women who find them intriguing, attractively packaged, and like the taste, they will serve a beneficial purpose. After all, it’s only grape juice.

**Drink Pinot -  
Keep Up Your  
Resveratrol  
Levels**

**Volume 4, Issue 44**

**June 27, 2005**

“French women do not lounge about at home with a glass of wine. They drink wine with food - a glass, perhaps two. From youth they learned the beauty of the beverage. Think of wine, as Oliver Wendell Homes said, as food, not as an alcoholic beverage.”

... ..Mireille Guiliano  
*Why French Women  
Don't Get Fat*

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So what exactly are the “Desperate House Wines” currently being offered to women?

**Beringer White Lie Early Season Chardonnay.** This wine is aimed at women’s low tolerance for alcohol. The grapes for this wine are harvested earlier in the growing season at a lower Brix level. In addition the wine is subjected to the spinning cone technology to further reduce the alcohol. The result is 9.8% alcohol compared to the 13.5%-14.5% found in many California wines. An all-woman research and development team worked on developing the wine, which was scheduled for release in May at \$10 a bottle. The label has a curly scripted label and corks stamped with white lies, such as “I got it on sale” and “It’s my natural hair color.” The Chardonnay is light-bodied and tastes quite different from the big, oaky, buttery Chardonnays popular of late. In addition to its low alcohol, the White Lies Chardonnay has only 91 calories per 5-ounce serving.

**Wine Block.** These boxed wines are packaged in specially designed wine bags that prevent oxygen transfer, reducing wine spoilage and increasing the shelf life of the wine after opening. The packaging is aesthetically appealing and the wine can be stored for up to six weeks after opening with not loss of drinkability. The boxed wine is aimed especially for women who want a quality wine but also want a quick, practical solution to opening and pouring wine while they take care of all the daily activities on the home front. The wine is packaged in 1.5 liter spoil-proof wine bags and boxes. The wine is 100 percent California grapes. The idea is to demystify the perception that good wine is too expensive, too hard to locate, or too difficult to manage after it is brought home. Basically it tells the busy woman that this wine can be easily incorporated into their daily lives. Approximately 100,000 cases of Wine Block Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay, will be released in 2005 nationwide. Wine Block is part of the Kendall-Jackson wine empire.

**Sofia blanc de blancs.** A sparkling wine packaged in a bright red flip-top can. A blend of 70% Pinot Blanc, 10% Muscat Canelli and 20% Sauvignon Blanc, it is a crisp and lively sparkler, named after Francis Ford Coppola’s daughter, Sofia. Available in 4-packs, the can holds 187 ml and is meant to be drunk through the bendable, telescoping straw that comes with each serving. No man would be caught dead drinking this wine. There is also a **Sofia Rosé** in a curvacious 750 ml bottle that women will find very appealing.

**Wolf Blass Lust** The Aussies are also trying to win the female wine drinker with their soft and approachable reds including colorful labels such as on Lust directed at the younger crowd.

**Mt. Vernon Winery.** Located in Auburn, California, the winery has launched the first breast cancer research wine bottle, featuring the breast cancer research first-class US postage stamp. The stamp was originally issued in 1999 and has raised \$55 million dollars to date. Mt. Vernon is awaiting final label approval from BATF. About 2,000 cases of the red table wine will be released in October which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The wine will sell for \$22.50 per bottle, 12.4% of which will go toward the Sacramento-based non-profit, CureBreastCancer, Inc., headed by Dr. Ernie Bodal, chief of surgery at Kaiser Permanente in Sacramento.

**Working Girl Wines.** Olympic Cellars is a small, three-woman-owned and operated winery in Washington state that produces about 3,200 cases. Previously marketed only in Washington, the Working Girl Wines are now available in California. The wines are unique in that they are produced by working women who give some of the profits from the wine to charities that support working women and their families. Wines created by women, for women, in support of women. These are meant to be wines that appeal to busy working women, but it turns out, men really like the wines too. The wines include **Working Girl White**, a blend of Chardonnay and Riesling, **Go Girl Red**, a Merlot-based blend, and **Rosé the Riveter**. Not to leave the men out, Olympic Cellars also make **Handyman Red** which is dedicated to the men who have helped the ladies out at the winery. The wines are currently being bottled at Hogue Cellars in Prosser, Washington, and they are finished with screw caps. The wines retail for \$10-\$12 per bottle and are available at [avalonwine.com](http://avalonwine.com).

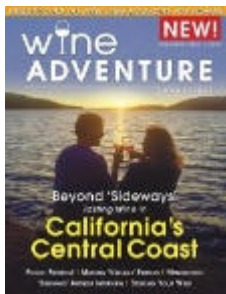


The list could go on including **Mad Housewife** (Rainer Wine in Seattle, WA - “Somewhere near the cool shadows of the laundry room. Past the litter box and between the plastic yard toys. This is your time.” A Cabernet

Sauvignon that is smooth and relatively free of tannins), **Seduction** (O'Brien Family Vineyard in Napa, packaged and marketed like perfume and reads on the label, "A voluptuous wine with sensual flavors and a velvet kiss." The wine is said to taste a little bit bigger than a Pinot Noir and very drinkable - see photo of bottle to right), and **Republic of Women Margaret River Merlot** (made by famous Aussie winemaker Jane Moss of Moss Brothers Wine to celebrate publication of her longtime friend Merrill Findlay's first novel.



Finally, to confirm that the "girlie wine" movement is on the march, the first wine magazine for women appears in July, 2005, named *Wine Adventures*. Published bi-monthly, the magazine focuses on the "softer" side of wine, with articles on the enjoyment of wine without taking the subject of wine too seriously. *Wine Adventure* Editor-In-Chief Michele Ostrove says "*Wine Adventure* is about expanding your wine horizons, both around the world and at home and having fun as you learn. The magazine is targeting the female segment of the population, 80% of which prefer wine to other alcoholic beverages, and is geared towards providing the kind of information women want regarding wine. New subscribers get six issues plus one bonus issue for the introductory price of \$30.00. An online version is also available. For subscription information, visit [wamagazine.com](http://wamagazine.com).



Maybe all this fuss about wines targeted to women is more marketing than substance. Master of Wine Jancis Robinson has said "I certainly don't think there is such a thing as female taste in wine. We don't go round insisting on that wine should be sweet or pink and, apart from being most unfortunately rather more vulnerable to the ravages of alcohol than men, I see no evidence that we are uniformly different from men in our wine preferences." Regardless, it is a subject of great fun to debate and Desperate House Wines will remain a catchy and controversial phrase.



## Wine & Health Attitudes Survey

As reported in the recent issue of *Wine Business Monthly*, a survey by the online research firm, morefocus LLC, found that 86 percent of the US-based responders agree or strongly agree that red wine, drunk in moderation, is beneficial to health. 71 percent consider 'moderate consumption' to be two or more glasses per day. In addition, the survey revealed a shift in preference from white wine to red. 77 percent of the panel prefer red to white, with a significant number indicating they drank red wine because of the evidence that it reduces heart disease. 44 percent felt that guidelines for healthy consumption of wine should be included on the labels of wine bottles.

For summary results of the wine and health attitudes survey, visit [corporate.morefocus.com](http://corporate.morefocus.com).

## A lot of Pinot from Radio-Coteau Wine Cellars

Radio-Coteau seems like a strange name for a winery until you investigate its meaning. The two conjoined words are a colloquial expression suggesting “word of mouth” derived from the northern Rhone region of France and translated as broadcasting from the hillside. Owner and winegrower Eric Sussman first heard this expression from a friend while living and working in Burgundy. It refers to a commitment to community, to growers found by word of mouth, tradition handed down in the cellar, and friends helping at harvest.

Born in New York, Eric developed an interest in wine while studying agriculture at Cornell University. He ventured to Washington’s Yakima Valley where he spent several years managing the vines and cellar of a small artisan producer. He then moved to France, spending the 1995 vintage in Burgundy at Domaine Armand in Pommard and Domaine Jacques Prieur in Meursault. He returned to northern California where he worked at Bonny Doon and Dehlinger. He crossed paths with Bill and Joan Smith, owners of La Jota, who became partners in Radio-Coteau Wine Cellars. Visit the website at [radiocoteau.com](http://radiocoteau.com).

Radio-Coteau focuses on Pinot Noir grown in the true Sonoma Coast, within the neighborhoods of Occidental, Bodega, Sebastopol and Cazadero. The highly regarded Savoy Vineyard northwest of Philo in Mendocino County’s Anderson Valley rounds out the portfolio. The inaugural release in 2002 was received with much praise and quickly sold out. Many wine critics raved about the wines. Andy Tan, sommelier and wine retailer has this to say: “In a recent blind tasting of six highly-rated 2001 Grand Cru Burgundies, the 2002 Radio-Coteau Hellenthal Vineyard Pinot Noir was inserted as a ringer. Everyone at the tasting thought the Radio-Coteau was either a Chambertin or a Bonne Mares. Incredible stuff. The wines (Radio-Coteau) seem to get better each time I taste them. After open for an hour, the usual pliant, caramel-soaked dark cherry flavors resemble a Vosne Romanee, but the middle-core has a steel element and structure reminiscent of a Gevrey Chambertin. Amazing stuff. Besides Radio-Coteau, only Rochioli and older Williams Selyem have similar bottle improvement over time. This estate is making the most exciting Pinot Noir from California. Toast to that!”

I recently tasted through the 2003 Radio-Coteau Pinot Noirs. The lineup includes the same portfolio of Pinots as in 2002, but production was more limited. The wines were released in March, 2005 to a mailing list. I found the wines superb. All of these young wines need at least an hour to open up. A lot of Pinot and a ton of Noir.

### **2003 Radio-Coteau “La Neblina” Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.4% alc., \$36, 220 cases).

This Pinot Noir is a blend of coastal vineyards which are characterized by “La Neblina” the Spanish term for the fog that rolls in from the Pacific Ocean to cool the vineyards daily. This wine is light on its feet and is the most elegant of the brood. Plum, basted beef and cassis are the dominating flavors here. A very nice mouthfeel enhances the pleasure.

### **2003 RadioCoteau Marsh Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.4% alc., \$40, 74 cases).

The Marsh Vineyard is 1.3 acres on a ridge overlooking the Pacific Ocean west of Occidental. Planted in 1999 to Swan selection Pinot Noir, the vineyard is owned and farmed by Peter and Barbara Marsh. This wine has it all. An earthy nose leads to a potpourri of luscious black cherries flavored with cocoa dust. A real smoothie with cashmere tannins. A long, sweet finish. Tres Pinot and my favorite.

### **2003 Radio-Coteau Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.5% alc., \$40, 100 cases).

Gard and Lori Hellenthal’s rugged hillside vineyard of Pinot Noir lies between Cazadero and Fort Ross on a high ridge top exposed to the cool coastal influence of the Pacific Ocean. This wine starts out a bit stemmy and rustic at first but mellows with airing. Bottomless fruit. A masculine prodigy that only hints at the greatness to come.

**2003 Radio-Coteau Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (14.4% alc., \$45, 440 cases). A lengthy growing season characterizes this vineyard northwest of Philo planted in 1992 and 1996. Lovely Pinot nose. Flamboyant black raspberries. Sexy, seamless and harmonious. Better than mother’s milk.

