

**Pinot Noir
Spoken Here**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

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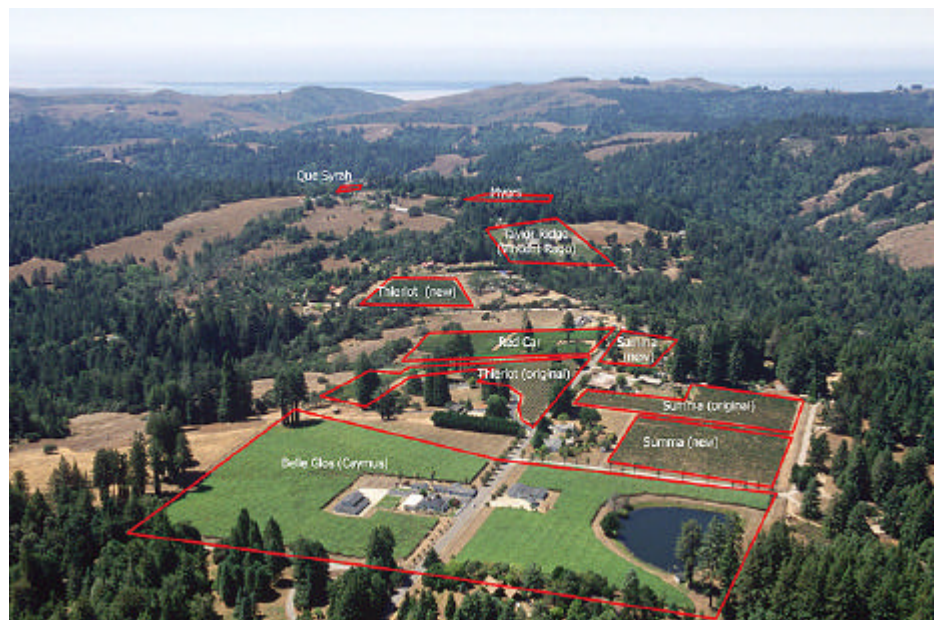
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Caymus Pinot Noir: Belle Glos

The Belle Glos label is owned by the Wagner family of Caymus Vineyards fame. The winery is best known for its Special Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay (Mer Soleil) and Caymus Conundrum, but Caymus has a long history with Pinot Noir. Some excellent Pinot Noirs were produced from relatively warm locations in the Napa Valley (Rutherford) in the late 1970's and early 1980's. They even produced a Pinot Noir Blanc wine labeled "Eye of Partridge". The Pinot Noir program was revived in 2001 with the release of Belle Glos Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir. The name comes from Chuck Wagner's mother, Loma Belle Glos-Wagner.

There are three areas where Caymus is farming Pinot Noir grapes - the Sonoma Coast (Taylor Lane Vineyard pictured in lower left, photo courtesy of Eric Anderson, grape-nutz.com) Santa Maria Valley, and the Santa Lucia Highlands (for a future bottling). These are all coastal areas, but the styles of Pinot Noir from each region will be quite different due to differences in the amount of fog, wind and sunlight at each vineyard. They have found that all three of these sites have stable diurnal temperature variation (differences in temperature from day to night during the growing season). Joseph J. Wagner is the vineyardist and winemaker.

The oldest Pinot Noir vines still producing in the United States are: 1946 block at Chalone, 1953 block at Hanzell and 1959 block at Dr Konstantin Frank in New York (Mt Eden was pulled out in 1977).



2003 Belle Glos Clark & Telephone Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir. (\$38). The 76-acre vineyard is named for its location at the corner of Clark and Telephone roads in the Santa Maria Valley. Caymus acquired a portion of the historic Santa Maria Hills Vineyard in the 1990s and began farming the vineyard nine years ago. The land, on a west-facing slope of the Santa Maria foothills, had been planted to Pinot Noir in the early 1970s, making it a treasured “old vines” Pinot Noir vineyard rarely found in California. The difference between the average daily high and low temperatures at Clark & Telephone Vineyard is very consistent across the growing season. This results in a balance between ripeness and acidity. The vines are “own rooted” and the clone is Martini, one of the first official Pinot Noir clones to be planted in the coastlands of California. After assuming control of the vineyard, the Wagners sharply reduced the per-vine and per-acre yield to increase the intensity of the fruit. The grapes for this release were hand-harvested at just over one ton per acre. Dark, sweet, black fruits dominate competing with brown spices like allspice and cloves. A little chocolate and pipe tobacco notes add interest. Mature fruit is in full display here. Give the wine an hour to fully blossom and it becomes a silky and sensuous mouthful that is so Pinot Noir. More appealing than Jessica Simpson in her Daisy Dukes. The bottle is highly distinctive with a swirling wax cap that cascades down the neck of the bottle. A handy tab is supplied to remove the imposing wax capsule, or a corkscrew may be inserted directly through the wax top.



2003 Taylor Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$50) This vineyard near Occidental was first planted in 1995. Consistent ripening of fruit in this cool coastal location has been a concern. To capture the maximum amount of sunlight, the vines were planted to an Italian trellis system (“Trentina”) that carries vine shoots out across a nearly horizontal canopy (similar to a solar panel) allowing the shoot growth to lie flat and absorb the maximum amount of sunlight throughout the day. A side benefit of this trellising is that it allows the herd of cover-crop grazing sheep to roam through the whole vineyard without an obstructions or damage to the vines. Dijon clones 113, 114, and 115 are planted here because of their high quality and early ripening. Like the Clark & Telegraph bottling, the grapes undergo a cold soak from 1-7 days, and the wine is aged 9 months in 60% new oak. I have not had the opportunity to taste the wine. Wine-maker notes are “Aromas of cherries, cola and mixed berries with suggestions of minerals, pumice and light smoke. The flavors are huge for Pinot Noir. Its smooth tannins and fruity, sweet oak flavors are beautifully balanced by the acidity.”



2003 Belle Glos Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$25). The grapes were sourced from five vineyards within the sub-appellations of the Sonoma Coast. A blend that expresses the many flavors of the coastlands. To be released September, 2005.

Unfortunately no website or phone orders; look to major wine retailers who sell other Caymus wines.

Club Noir Pinot Noir Shootout in Oregon

Mark Sutherland sent me the results of an interesting Pinot tasting recently involving Pinot Noirs from California, Oregon, and Burgundy. 21 wine lovers gathered for this tasting at Harris Bridge Vineyards in Oregon including the principal organizers pictured (from left, Nathan Warren - owner and wine-maker, Harris Bridge Vineyards, Chris Heider, owner and winemaker, 720 Wine Cellars, Jake Hartinger, and Mark Sutherland). Mark Sutherland is a dedicated Pinot Noir enthusiast who organizes a number of Pinot tastings in the San Francisco Bay Area under the auspices of "Club Noir".



The wines were divided into three flights of six wines according to vintages and tasted blind. The results are summarized with the wines listed from #1-6 with #1 being the most preferred by the group and #6 the least preferred.

Flight 1 2002 Vintage

- #1 2002 Patz & Hall Burnside Vineyard Pinot Noir
- #2 2002 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
- #3 2002 Broadley Willamette Valley Pinot Noir
- #4 2002 Shea Wine Cellars Block 25 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir
- #5 2002 Mongeard-Mugneret Vosne-Romanee 1er En Orveaux
- #6 2002 Domaine Jean Tardy Vosne-Romanee 1er Les Chaumes

Flight 2 1996 and 1998 Vintages

- #1 1998 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
- #2 1998 Dehlinger Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
- #3 1998 Rex Hill Willamette Valley Pinot Noir
- #4 1998 Beaux Freres Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir
- #5 1996 Faiveley Echezeax
- #6 1996 Gros-Frere et Souer Grands Echezeax

Flight 3 1993 Vintage

- #1 1993 Domaine Drouhin Oregon Laurene Willamette Valley Pinot Noir
- #2 1993 Jadot Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Estournelles St Jacques
- #3 1993 Mt Eden Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir
- #4 1993 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
- #5 1993 Frederic Esmonin Griottes Chambertin
- #6 1993 St Innocent O'Connor Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir

Domaine Drouhin is produced in the French style and older vintages from the early 1990s have consistently aged extremely well. Mt Eden Pinot Noirs are also very age-worthy. This type of comparative tasting is always of interest and shows the preference of the American palate for the fruit-forward style of American Pinot Noir.

Matt Kramer, in a recent article in *Wine Spectator* (Sept 30, 2005) titled "Why Tasting Panels Fail" criticized judging wines by committee since the choices "almost always run to the familiar, to 'safe' choices, to the least offensive wines of the bunch." His point is that palates vary considerably and what one taster thinks is great, another may find nasty, so a wine that may be very individualistic and appealing to a only a few will not be awarded for its distinctiveness. That said, wine is very amendable to comparison much like art, music, and food. Group tastings are like grammar school for most wine enthusiasts - a learning venue where they can compare and contrast and develop their palate and absorb the knowledge of others in the group.



Harris Bridge Winery, site of the Club Noir tasting.

Special Events for Pinot Noir Lovers

Santa Fe Wine & Chile Fiesta September 21-25, 2005. A spectacular food and wine event featuring wines of all styles and types, not just Pinot Noir. Highlights of the event are guest chef luncheons and dinners including such notables as Mark Miller (Coyote Café), Rick Bayless (Topolobampo), and Mark Kiffin (The Compound Restaurant). For Pinoaficionados there is a wine seminar featuring 30 years of Ponzi Pinot Noir hosted by Richard Ponzi, and a seminar on Santa Barbara County Pinot Noirs including Dick Dore of Foxen, Bruno D'Alfonso of Sanford, and Tim Duggan of Fiddlehead Cellars. The Grand Food & Wine Tasting at The Santa Fe Opera features 60 of Santa Fe's finest restaurants and 90 wineries from around the world. Pinot Noir wineries pouring include Calera, Chalone, Domaine Serene, Elk Cove, Erath, GRuet, Ponzi, Rex Hill, Testarossa, Thomas Fogerty, Van Duzer, King Estate, and Landmark. For further information visit the website at www.santafewineandchile.org or call 505-438-8960.



Celebration of Harvest 2005 October 8, 2005. This one day event is hosted by the 100+ members of the Santa Barbara Vintners' Association. It is held outdoors on the grounds of Rancho Sisquoc in the Santa Maria Valley. Over 100 wineries are pouring and there is an abundance of locally-grown foods prepared by top chefs from Santa Barbara County, all accompanied by live music. Tickets are \$60. A Vintner's Visa is \$25 which allows access to many of the wineries in the region (Both Harvest Ticket and Vintner's Visa Combo is \$75, a bargain). Roundtrip bus transportation is available from Santa Barbara, Solvang, or Santa Maria for \$20. Visit the SBCWA website at www.sbcountywines.com for further information.

Pinot on the River Russian River Valley October 28, 29, & 30, 2005. Second annual event featuring in-depth Pinot Noir tastings and seminars, vineyard tours and great food. The event venue is the Retreat Resort & Spa in Guerneville, California. This pinot festival focuses on highly-allocated, limited production Pinot Noirs from the West Coast. Schedule to be announced September 1st. The website is www.pinotfestival.com.

A Celebration of Santa Rita Hills October 28, 29, & 30, 2005. An exploration of vinifera as it is expressed by the terroir of the Santa Rita Hills held at the historic La Purisma Mission and Foley Estates Winery in the Santa Rita Hills. The event includes a Richard Sanford Tribute Dinner, symposiums moderated by Karen MacNeil (author of *The Wine Bible*), a benefit Santa Rita Hills wines auction and a Santa Barbara style BBQ. Wineries participating include Arcadian, Babcock, Bonaccorsi, Brewer-Clifton, Cargasacchi, Casa Cassara, Clos Pepe, Drew Family Cellars, Fess Parker, Fiddlehead, Flying Goat, Loring, Melville, Ortman, Longoria, Sanford, Tantara, Whitcraft and more. \$600 for an all-access pass. To register phone 805-686-0911 or visit the website at www.localwineevents.com.

Latest Noteworthy Pinot Noir Releases

2003 Ancien Carneros Pinot Noir (\$30) 707-255-3908

2002 Domaine Drouhin Oregon Laurene Pinot Noir (\$50) 503-864-2700

2003 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch RRV Pinot Noir (\$35) 707-823-3887

2003 Foxen Bien Nacido Pinot Noir 805-937-4251

2003 Gary Farrell Jackson Hill RRV Pinot Noir, 2003 Allen Vineyard Hillside Block RRV Pinot Noir 707-473-2900

2004 Kenwood Olivet Lane Reserve Pinot Noir, 2004 Sonoma Series RRV Pinot Noir 707-833-6664

2003 Londer Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$30), 2003 Parabol Anderson Valley Pinot Noir, (\$48), 2003 Keefer Pinot Noir (\$42) 707-895-9016

2003 Martinelli Blue Slide Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 2003 Reserve Pinot Noir, 2003 Seven Mules Vineyard Pinot Noir 707-525-0570

2003 Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Seven Springs Vineyard Pinot Noir, 2003 Bethel Heights Vineyard Southeast Block Pinot Noir 503-554-5545

2003 Pisoni Vineyards & Winery Estate Pinot Noir (\$60) Fax 831-675-2557

2003 Siduri Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$42), 2003 Sonatera Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$42), 2003 Sapphire Hill Vineyard RRV Pinot Noir (\$42), 2003 Van der Kamp Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$42), and 2004 Sonoma County Pinot Noir (\$19). 707-578-2882

Older releases worth searching for which won Double Gold at this year's 18th Annual San Francisco International Wine Competition: 2003 Foley Estates Rancho Santa Rosa Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir (Double Gold and Best Pinot Noir) (\$38), 2002 Papapietro Perry RRV Pinot Noir, 2002 Meridian Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir, and 2002 Lincourt Vineyards Santa Barbara Pinot Noir.

Wine Jumps into Reality Scene

"The Wine Makers" is a reality television series scheduled for PBS produced by Kevin Whelan and Jennifer Levine. This six-part series follows five people from varied backgrounds competing for a chance to launch their own wine label. Here is your opportunity to become a wine celebrity as the candidates for the show will be chosen from the public by write-in essays and open-casting calls at stores like Sur La Table and Fresh Fields. There will also be on-line casting calls with wine.com and print ads in magazines like *Bon Appetite* and *Gourmet*.

The series will be shot in San Luis Obispo County and in Australia beginning in December. Plans are to air the program in the spring of 2006. The production company, Doc City Productions, has developed several wine-themed television programs including WINE 101 narrated by David Hyde Pierce (Niles on 'Frasier').




PrinceofPinot.com

The Prince welcomes your comments,
your wine epiphanies, your celestial
Pinot experiences and your
recommendations.

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Some of you may wonder why I sometimes describe wines with phrases from Doo-Wop songs like “My heart goes hippety-hop” and “The magic that you do.” Now you know. Here I am with The Alleycats. Like classic jukebox favorites, the best Pinot Noirs harmonize a variety of ingredients, with just enough variation to keep your attention.

Useful Free Wine Websites

Wineweb.com: Search for that special Pinot Noir on this website. The site directs you to wine merchants that have the wine you want for sale online. The wine catalogs of numerous United States retailers are integrated on the site. Similar to winesearcher.com.

Poppingcorks.com: A complete directory of wine reviews worldwide and links to other significant wine websites.

Cellartracker.com: This virtual wine cellar inventory management site was built by Eric LeVine who is a wine geek with more than 12 years of former software development experience at Microsoft. Most wine collectors do not keep careful records of their purchases and inventory. This site allows collectors to keep a virtual cellar, manage inventory, log personal tasting note, print wine lists and bar-code bottles, upload images of bottles and wine labels, and trade notes with over 7,000 other members (over 38,000 community tasting notes). Your inventory can be accessed anytime from your browser, as well as a PDA and a cell phone. The service is free, at least until the end of 2005.

Cellarexchange.com: A free wine auction and cellar exchange network run by Doug Pearson out of North Carolina. You can post wines for sale as well as bid on wine and accessories without commissions. The service is free for the seller and free for the buyer. Retail shopping pages to support the site and links pages are included. The number of wines for sale is limited at present, but once word gets out that this is a perfect place for selling overstocked personal inventory, it should offer a more extensive selection.