

**Pinot Noir: Only Sexual Analogies can do it Justice**

# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotaficionados

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Inside this issue:

J. Wilkes Pinot Noir	5
Marin County Pinot Noir Celebration	6
Hospices of Sonoma	7
Book: <i>The Grail</i>	8
WineFritz	8
Pinot Evil	9
Rivers Marie Pinot Noir	9

## Talisman Cellars: Pinot Terroir-ist

When you meet friendly Scott Rich, he strikes you as a rugged mountain man. The truth is, he loves the challenge of working vineyards in unusual and harsh locations. He says, "I like working with vineyards that are on the edge. I like to express *terroir* - that's the beauty of Pinot Noir - and that comes through in the more extreme vineyards." For example, he has labored at Steve MacRostie's Wildcat Mountain Vineyard in Sonoma, the highest vineyard in Carneros, where the wind blows from all directions practically all of the time. One of his current sources of Pinot Noir, Thorn Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast, is only five miles from Sebastopol, but is a very inhospitable site.

Scott has an impressive winemaking resume. He made the wines at Etude with Tony Soter from 1995 to 2000, consulted with numerous wineries including Carneros Creek, worked harvests in Chile, and made the wines (Cabernet and Sauvignon Blanc) as well as overseeing the construction of a new winery at Moraga Vineyards in Bel Air, California. But it was his desire for true personal artistic expression that led him, along with his wife Marta, to found Talisman Cellars in 1992.

At U.C. Davis, where Scott Rich guest teaches, the students will ask him what he does when his Pinot has a problem in its development. He tells them: "Go home and have a beer and think about it. I think sometimes what we think of as a problem is just a stage in the development of the wine. Just leaving it alone may be the best thing to do."



Scott Rich's minimalist approach to making Pinot leaves him time to enjoy life with his wife, Marta.

(Wines & Vines, Feb, 2006)

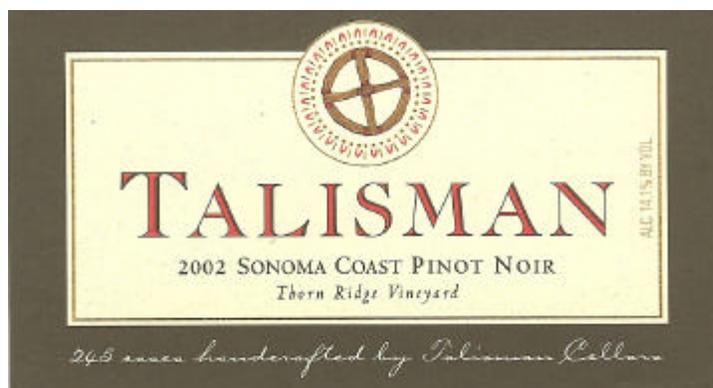
Talisman is a word for a charm and the Talisman logo on the label is a stylized representation of the *paho*, a Native American charm that has been imbued with the power to protect one from harm. The name and logo are a tribute to Scott's mother who is a Native American. The *paho* features a circle of life and the four directions showing our place in the universe. The rays around the edge represent the sun, which gives the energy for life on earth and allows the grapes to ripen.

Scott released his first Talisman Pinot Noir in 1992, and he has been on a quest ever since to find sources for Pinot Noir grapes that have "unique site characteristics and the potential to convey distinctive and singular terroirs." One of the characteristic features that has drawn Scott to Pinot Noir is that it expresses itself uniquely from different vineyards. Initially he sourced grapes from Carneros, making a regional Carneros Pinot Noir. By 1999, he began to make a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir from Ted Klopp's Klopp Ranch Vineyard off Guerneville Road near Dehlinger and Kistler vineyards. In 2001 he made the switch from regional wines to vineyard-designate wines with the release of Ted Klopp's Thorn Vineyard located on the northern edge of the Petaluma Gap in the Sonoma Coast. In 2003 and 2004, he found still more new sources including Engel Vineyard on Sonoma Mountain and Wildcat Mountain Vineyard in Carneros. Currently he uses custom-crush facilities at Bouchaine Winery to craft his Pinot Noirs.

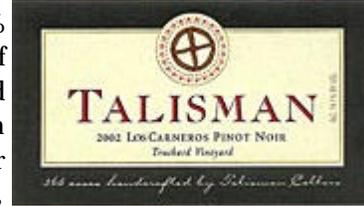
At Etude, Scott needed to craft Pinot Noirs that were ready to drink on release, for over 75% of the production went to restaurants. With the Talisman wines, he can create Pinot Noirs that have ageability. He says, "I make my wines to age, even if no one gives them a chance." It is the secondary characteristics of Pinot Noir that develop with cellaring that hold the most interest for him. The tasting notes which follow are a testament to the interest that develops in older Talisman Pinot Noirs. Opened bottles of wines from more recent vintages were still excellent 3 days later.

Scott is not a fan of jelly-jar blockbusters. If you prefer muscular plum puddings with alcohol and oak aromas under massive fruit, you will not like his Pinot Noirs. On the other hand, if you seek classic Pinot Noirs that are balanced, exquisite, gorgeous and pure, you are in store for a few winegasms after popping some Talisman corks. Many wine drinkers equate intensity of color in a wine with quality or flavor. With Pinot Noir there is no such equation. The greatest Pinot Noir I have ever drank, a 1990 DRC Romanee Conti, was as transparent as a red negligee, yet it possessed more layers of complexity and interest than any Pinot Noir I have had from the dark side.

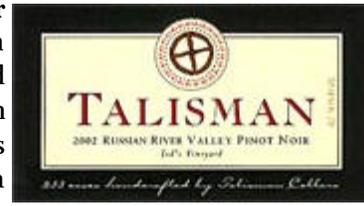
Scott was gracious enough to allow me to taste through a vertical of Talisman Pinot Noirs from 1997 to 2002. I spent a lot of time with these wines and I can tell you that these are consistently elegant examples of Pinot Noir that do reflect their origins. The Carneros wines were more old school Carneros style with dried cherries, herbal, exotic wood and earthy notes which add interest with age. The Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs were more fruit-forward with characteristic voluptuous red fruits, Asian spices and cola. The Sonoma Coast bottlings had tightly wound acidity, more backbone and grit and full dark fruit flavors. I think it is a tribute to Scott's minimalistic winemaking practices that he is able to bring out the distinctive features of each *terroir*.



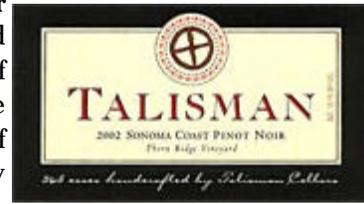
**2002 Talisman Truchard Vineyard Los Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 365 cases, \$38. The Truchard Vineyard has been a reliable source of Pinot Noir for a long time. It is located close to Brown Ranch Vineyard (Saintsbury) and Hyde Vineyard in Los Carneros. The grapes came from two blocks of the Truchard Vineyard: an established planting of over twenty-year old vines and a third--bearing-year block. Clones are Swan, Pommard, Dijon 115 and 777. Aged 16 months in new and one-year-old French oak barrels. This is a beauty that actually looks like Pinot Noir. Everything here is gentle and subtle. Plenty of dark cherries, herbs, chocolate and a kiss of oak. The wine finishes cleanly with racy acidity. A delicious sucker for immediate gratification.



**2002 Talisman Ted's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 233 cases, \$38. The vineyard, planted in 1994, is located in the rolling hills just west of Laguna de Santa Rosa. The climate is cool and vigor of the vines is controlled by irrigation. Clones include Swan selection, Pommard and Dijon 115. Yield is 2.4 tons per acre. The wine is aged in 50% new, 40% one-year-old French oak barrels. The wine has a lovely perfume of cherry pie and spice. The opulent dark cherries are enhanced by gregarious Asian spices, licorice and cola. A sweet finish with dusty tannins leaves a nice impression. This is an opulent wine that tasted terrific two days after opening.



**2002 Talisman Thorn Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 245 cases, \$44. This vineyard lies in a rugged, cold, and foggy location on the edge of the Petaluma Gap at the lowest point of California's Coastal Range. Ted Klopp farms this desolate outpost. The soils are low-vigor and water is very limited. This Pinot is full of character and just plain terrific. Harmonious and balanced with a velvety mouth feel. A lot of subtle Pinot flavor featuring red and dark berries, cherries and earthiness. This is a wine that needs some time and attention to show its charms. But give it some air and it becomes silky and sensuous. You can even enjoy it as it evolves over several days (it was delicious from the opened bottle three days later, becoming less about fruit and more about interesting notes of leather, tobacco, exotic wood and wet leaves).



**2001 Talisman Cathy's Cuvee Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 81 cases, sold out. While Scott and Marta were bottling their 2001 Carneros Pinot Noir in 2003, they learned of the tragic death of a dear friend, Kathy Polucha-Kessler, who was one of seven skiers killed in an avalanche in British Columbia. The Richs' bottled this special wine made from the grapes of Las Brisas Vineyard in Carneros. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this wine went to the Truckee Donner Land Trust, a cause that Kathy espoused. This was a challenging wine for me - a Jekyll and Hyde Pinot. Initially it had really no aromas and was flat, bitter and stemmy. However, decanting the wine and waiting a couple of hours brought forth an interesting Pinot Noir which actually was even better two days later. The nose blossomed with earthy cherries and nutmeg. A silky platform developed with flavors of cinnamon-laced cherries, leather, spice, mushrooms and sandalwood. An argument for giving wines time to open up.

**2001 Talisman Thorn Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 404 cases, sold out. The 2001 vintage was marked by a cold, damp spring and the worst frost since 1980. As a result, yields were very small (1.9 tons-per-acre). This Pinot offers attractive aromas of cherries and warm cookie dough. The fruit is enhanced with notes of earth, mushrooms and *sauvage*. The structure is firm but the style is elegant and silky. A rustic, Burgundian-styled wine that takes awhile to come around. Three days later the edges softened and it was still pumping out flavors.

**2001 Talisman Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc.. Don't be fooled by the color of this wine. Almost transparent, it is well-stocked with flavor. A spicy nose leads to delicate notes of cherry, raspberry, leather and spice. Very feminine, if not a little too light. The prominent acidity may not appeal to everyone.

**2000 Talisman Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 300 cases. The grapes come from Klopp Ranch Vineyard probably made most famous by Merry Edwards. Aged 10 months in 65% new French oak. Elegance with a capital E. The nose is weighty with cherries and toasty oak. The sappy red cherry fruit is tinged with mocha and spice and flows over the palate with a refined mouth feel. The lingering finish is lip-smacking. Once this wine lands its hooks into you, there is no tearing away. A reference wine for neophytes trying to find out what the excitement about aged Pinot is all about. Excellent!

**2000 Talisman Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 280 cases. The grapes were sourced from two different blocks of the Truchard Vineyard. This Pinot has more body and structure than the RRV bottling of the same vintage. The nose is appealing with sweet, ripe fruit and earthy spices. The red and dark fruits are highlighted by earth and underbrush. Notable tannins still persist on the oaky finish. The next day, the finish had noticeably softened and the tannins were beautifully integrated.

**1999 Talisman Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 331 cases. The 1997-1999 wines have a very slight brickish color. The nose is very funky initially but this soon blows off. The hardy flavors of wet leaf, rich baking chocolate, cinnamon spice, and vitamin tension are satisfying and even better the next day. The mouth feel is like satin.

**1998 Talisman Carneros Pinot Noir** 13% alc., 171 cases. A nice hint of spiced raisin and licorice in the nose. Full compote of cherries, herbs and leather which picks up steam with air time. Plenty of stuffing left and thoroughly enjoyable. Impressive for a difficult vintage. A Hugh Hefner wine: showing a little age but still perky.

**1997 Talisman Carneros Pinot Noir** 13% alc., 267 cases. Astonishingly fresh and alive upon opening. I had to keep looking at the label to be sure this was from 1997. Great body, full mouth feel, perfect balance, nice acid backbone. The nose offers a hint of port and cinnamon toast. Cranberries, rose petal, herbs, licorice and mint in profusion. A complete wine. Drink this Pinot blind and you might think it is a recent vintage. This beauty lost a little intensity over time - forget the foreplay and drink up.

Talisman Pinot Noirs can be purchased on the website at [www.talismanwine.com](http://www.talismanwine.com). The phone number is 707-996-3705. A limited number of older, library wines are available by contacting Scott. Talisman was one of the featured Pinot Noir producers at this year's World of Pinot Noir in Shell Beach, California. Decanting the more recent vintages will add to their appeal. Drinking any of these Pinots with food will set your soul on fire. Deft winemaking here, bro.

## J. Wilkes: Santa Maria Valley Pinot Specialist

While living in California's Newport Beach during his formative years, Jeff Wilkes struck up a friendship with Bill Miller and taught him some of the finer points of sailing. Miller's family was involved in the farming and ranching business in California for several generations and owned the Bien Nacido Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley. To help him manage and develop the vineyard and market the grapes from this fledgling vineyard, Bill Miller asked Jeff to join the management team in 1984. At that time, most of the Bien Nacido Pinot Noir was sold in bulk for sparkling wine. It was a 1982 Austin Cellars Bien Nacido Pinot Noir that led Jeff to his epiphanic realization that still Pinot Noir was really the future for Bien Nacido.

Jeff spent eighteen years at Bien Nacido involved in the marketing and sales of grapes, introducing new Pinot Noir clones, and improving viticultural techniques in the vineyard. He realized, along with Bill Miller, that for local small wineries to prosper, they needed some assistance from the grower. As a result, Central Coast Wine Services was started in Santa Maria to provide a centralized location for local wineries to lease space and produce their wines.

During his time at Bien Nacido, Jeff visited untold numbers of wineries and vineyards, and developed a real sense of how he wanted to make Pinot Noir. In 2001, he left Bien Nacido and began his quest to make ultra-premium Pinot Noir under the J. Wilkes label. His goal is a style that leans toward finesse with a solid acid and tannic backbone to perform at the table and age gracefully. He wants to achieve that delicate balance between extraction and the natural delicacy of Pinot Noir. Jeff now sources grapes from Bien Nacido Vineyard and nearby Solomon Hills Vineyard in Santa Maria Valley.

**2002 J. Wilkes Bien Nacido Q Block Pinot Noir** 215 cases, \$48.50. A lovely cherry and floral nose lingers and leads to a fresh cherry-toned and spicy finish. A very feminine, sexy Pinot. Lip smacking.

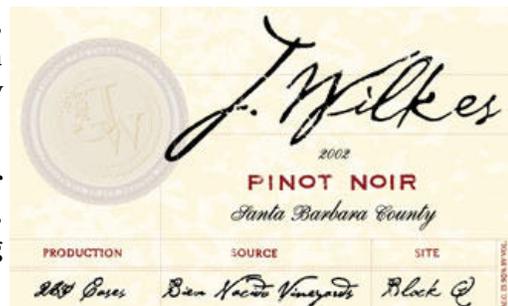
**2003 J. Wilkes Voll-Foss Vineyards Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 175 cases, \$27. A delicious Pinot Noir with verve. Dark, deep, and dense with sweet purple fruits and some tantalizing earthy notes. Not overblown, but a rich and full mouth feel.

**2003 J. Wilkes Bien Nacido Q Block Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., 215 cases, \$48.50. The wine has a focused nose of fresh baked cherry tart. The elegant cherry flavors are highlighted with oak and a touch of pepper. Well-delineated. The finish is satisfying with bracing acidity - maybe too acidic for some tastes. A dining table performer.

**2004 J. Wilkes Bien Nacido Bien Nacido Hillside Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 300 cases, \$38. An elegant and velvety Pinot that is straightforward. The aromas and flavors feature tart cherries, cranberry, oak and spice. A decent, but shy drink which may need some cellaring to coax out the fruit.

**2004 J. Wilkes Solomon Hills Vineyard Block 3 Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 350 cases, \$38. This Pinot sports a pretty dark garnet robe. The deep, dark Pinot nose leads to luscious flavors of blackberries, mushrooms and mocha. The mouth feel is full and silky. This is a winner that really shines with some air time. Really great with cheese which blunts the racy acidity.

J. Wilkes Pinot Noirs are available online at [www.jwilkes.com](http://www.jwilkes.com). Quantity discounts. The phone number is 805-899-2845.



## Upcoming Festivals Celebrate Pinot Fabulosity

As Paris Hilton would say about Pinot Noir, "It's Hot!" Over the next few months there are a number of Pinot Noir Festivals in California that any pinotaficianado or pinot-lover-in-training will find enjoyable. Anyone who feels short on Pinot drinking experience should NOT shy away from these events as they are non-pretentious affairs that welcome everyone (even Zin fanatics). I must warn you, however, that the quality of current Pinot Noirs is so high that you can easily unknowingly stumble upon a wine that is stuff dreams are made of, and you will never be able to turn back to your cheap daily drinkers. Call it an epiphany or losing your pinot noirginiting, it's a heck of a lot of fun. Plus, you will be benefiting charitable causes as well as honoring winemakers, who God knows, work harder and sacrifice more than most any human being on earth to bring their passion to the table.

### Marin County Pinot Noir Celebration

June 9 & 10, 2006, 5-8 PM

The Marin County Winegrowers Association and the Marin Agricultural Land Trust with co-sponsorship by the North Coast Grape Growers Association will present a celebration of Marin County Pinot Noir at the historic Escalle Winery (est. 1881), 771 Magnolia Avenue, Larkspur, California. The event will benefit the non-profit Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) and showcase the newest Marin Pinot Noir releases. MALT was formed in 1980 to acquire agricultural conservation easements on farmland in voluntary transactions with landowners and is a model for agricultural land preservation efforts across the nation. MALT has so far permanently protected 38,000 acres of Marin County land on 57 family farms and ranches (for more information, [www.malt.org](http://www.malt.org)).

The Escalle Winery is the oldest winery in Marin County, and while no longer in production, and rarely open to the public, it is a perfect venue for this event. The winery was established in 1881 near downtown Larkspur, just minutes north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Proprietress Mary Tiscornia has gratefully opened the winery for this event.

Quantities of Marin County Pinot Noir are very small but the quality is outstanding. The Marin climate is influenced by the Pacific Ocean on Marin's rocky western coast and the foggy San Pablo Bay to the east. Marin's winters are warmer than neighboring Napa and Sonoma and the resulting vine "bud break" is earlier. However, the lack of heat waves push flowering, "set," and harvest many weeks beyond Carneros and contribute to one of the longest natural hang times in the state. Marin winegrowers have discovered small sites for Pinot Noir among the rolling hills and diverse soils and today produce exquisite Pinot Noirs (see *PinotFile*, Vol 4, Issue 34, April 18, 2005, for extensive coverage of Marin County Pinot Noir). Producers who will be pouring at this benefit are **Corda Winery, Dutton-Goldfield, Pey-Marín Vineyards, Pt. Reyes Vineyard, Stubbs Vineyard, Sean Thackrey, and Vision Cellars.**

Last year's event was so well attended, an extra day was added. Complimentary valet parking will be offered from 5-8 PM and along with the Pinot Noirs, a variety of artisan cheeses and foods grown on family farms of Marin County will be offered. Tickets for this event must be purchased in advance from MALT at [www.malt.or](http://www.malt.or) or 415-663-1158 and are \$40 per person, \$30 for MALT members and may be tax deductible.

# The Hospices of Sonoma

May 19,20,21, 2006

This three day annual wine and food party kicks off Friday May 19, 2006 with a Spring Fever Winemaker Dinner at goldridgepinot at 2500 Gravenstein Highway, North, in Sebastopol, California. A barrel tasting of the 2005 Russian River Valley, Green Valley and Carneros Pinot Noirs will be followed by a luncheon with the winemakers who will pour their current releases and library wines. On Saturday, May 20, the pre-auction 2005 barrel tasting is staged, followed by a tappas-style luncheon and the Charity Barrel Auction. Participants will bid for approximately 35 half-barrel lots of Sonoma's finest Pinot Noirs in 2-5 case increments. Buyers



receive their wines bottled with the distinctive Hospices of Sonoma wine label, which includes a cuvee name designated by the buyer. I understand magnums can be bottled as well. Prior to *Sideways*, the auction lots went for \$1000 to \$4000 for the 5 cases. This is far more accessible than the Napa Valley Cabernet equivalent. The event raps up on Sunday with a La Paulée Garden Luncheon at Iron Horse Vineyards, 9786 Ross Station Road, Sebastopol, California (open only to auction paddle holders).

The net auction proceeds benefit local children in life-threatening circumstances through the WCC Charitable Foundation. A home will be built as temporary housing for families with hospitalized children at any Sonoma County hospital. A modular house on the Sutter Medical Center of Santa Rosa currently serves the community until a permanent WCC House is built. Weekend package tickets are \$400 per person. Tickets for the Spring Fever Winemaker Dinner and Saturday auction are \$275 per person (\$2,000 for a table of 8). Individual tickets to the Saturday Pinot Noir Barrel Auction are \$75 per person. Reservations: [www.hospicesofsonoma.org](http://www.hospicesofsonoma.org), or contact Debra Reno at 707-823-9463 or email [Debra@Hospicesofsonoma.org](mailto:Debra@Hospicesofsonoma.org).

The confirmed participants are listed below and reads like a who's who of Sonoma Pinot Noir.

CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS

- De Loach Vineyards - Donum Estate
- DuNah Vineyard & Winery
- Dutton Estate Winery - Dutton-Goldfidd
- Flowers Vineyard & Winery - Foppiano Vineyards
- Freeman Vineyard & Winery
- Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery
- Glòria Ferrer - goldridgepinot - Halleck Vineyard
- Hanna Winery & Vineyards - Hartford Family Winery
- Iron Horse Vineyards - J Vineyards & Winery
- Joseph Swan Winery
- Kosta Browne Winery - La Crema
- Landmark Vineyards - Lynmar - MacMurray Ranch
- Marimar Estate - Olivet Lane
- Patz & Hall Wine Company - Paul Hobbs Wines
- Radio Coteau - Russian Hill Estate Winery
- Rutz Cellars - Scherrer Winery - Schug Carneros Estate
- Siduri Winery - Tandem Winery - TR Elliott
- Wild Hog Vineyard

## New Book on Pinot Envy



Brian Doyle is a well-respected writer who also is a wine geek. He has authored six books and is editor of the University of Portland's *Portland Magazine*. His work has appeared in publications such as *Atlantic Monthly* and *Times of London*. While drinking wine at Oregon's Lange Winery, he had a mini-epiphany and began to wonder about how grapes were turned into world-class Pinot Noir. He was interested in discovering how master winemakers sought the Holy Grail, the perfect Pinot Noir.

To write *The Grail*, Brian Doyle spent most of a year's time in Oregon's Lange Winery vineyards chronicling the work of winegrowers. He tells the story of Lange Winery founder Don Lange and his son, Jesse, and the process of growing grapes in the Willamette Valley, and the confluence of art and science in the winemaking process. He reveals the numerous challenges of winegrowers including unpredictable weather and vineyard pests and diseases. The subtitle of *The Grail* is appropriately "A year ambling and shambling through an Oregon vineyard in pursuit of the best pinot noir wine in the whole wide world."

The most appealing aspect of this book is that it is written by a relatively novice wine enthusiast rather than a professional wine writer. The resulting straight-forward, non-technical approach is very readable.

*The Grail* is published by Oregon State University Press and is available at bookstores, online or by calling 1-800-426-3797.

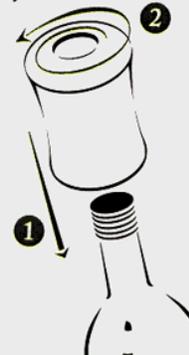
## Wine Fritz: A Tool for Screw Caps

I knew it was only a matter of time before someone came up with a simple device for removing screw caps. Wine professionals needed something for presentation and opening of screw cap wines. Somehow it just seems really cheap to present the diner a bottle and then screw the cap off like a bottle of sparkling water. Something was needed to replace the venerable corkscrew.

Shari Scholten, the wine-loving owner of Fritz Alpine Bistro in Keystone, Colorado has introduced the WineFritz, a patent-pending wine opener for screw cap wines. The aluminum tool slips over the screw cap enhancing its appearance. The patented mechanism inside the tool grabs a hold of the cap and as the presenter makes the turn with the tool, a distinctive cracking sound is heard as the cap breaks free (instead of a 'pop', there is a 'crack'). The screw cap is hidden in the cavity of the tool and can be subtly removed from the eyes of the wine drinker.

The WineFritz is available at \$39.95, plus S & H, online at [www.winefritz.com](http://www.winefritz.com) or by phoning 1-866-374-8948.

As the preferred method to open a screw cap bottle of wine, the Wine Fritz™ offers restaurant quality and style for professionals and wine lovers alike. A practical work of art, the Wine Fritz is handsomely crafted in anodized aluminum. Finally...a tool built to match the ever-increasing quality of wine bottled with screw caps.



I also have an idea for a new tool to replace the traditional silver cup that sommeliers wear around their neck to sample wines. A hole can be drilled in the bottom side of a screw cap and a silver chain threaded through the opening. The sommelier can then sip a thimble-size sample of the wine directly from the screw cap, leaving plenty for you. I call it the ScrewCup.

  
**PrinceofPinot.com**

Next week I will be in New York visiting some Finger Lakes Pinot Producers.

**Pinot Noir: Only Sexual Analogies can do it Justice**

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### Pinot Evil

**Pinot Evil is a new bulk Pinot Noir imported from France. Apparently it arose from an overflow of grapes in France and was shipped in containers and bottled in the United States. The label features monkeys in a 'fear no evil' pose and the price is \$4-\$5. The wine may be appropriately named for it is reported to be watery and evil tasting (according to [zinquisition.blogspot.com](http://zinquisition.blogspot.com)).**

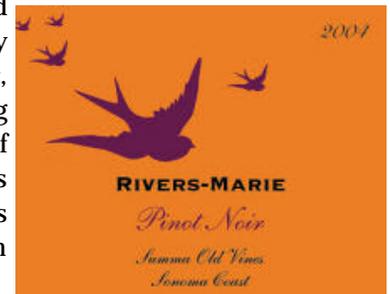
### More Pinot Evil

**The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Bronco Wines is planting acres of Pinot Noir in their Ceres Vineyard and is gearing up to release a Charles Shaw ('Two Buck Chuck') Pinot Noir exclusively for Trader Joe's Markets in California. Some oak chips, a little megapurple, a slug of Syrah, and surprise!, a \$2 Pinot Noir. This will be one evil woman.**

## Rivers Marie: Pinot Noir from the Edge

New passionate and committed Pinot Noir producers seem to pop up overnight. I am trying to compile a complete list of California Pinot Noir wineries, but I fear the project will never see completion. Thomas Rivers Brown and Genevieve Marie Welsh are Pinot Noir fans who wanted to start a small wine project. A friendship with Summa Vineyard proprietors Scott and Joan Zeller gave them a credible source for Pinot Noir grapes and they were off and running. The Zellers then acquainted them with Richard and Darla Radcliffe at Occidental Ridge Vineyard (slightly warmer site than Summa planted in 1999 to Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777), and Patricia Wilson-Juckett at Willow Creek Vineyard (a small Occidental site similar to Summa in climate and exposition, planted to Dijon clone 777).

Using his considerable winemaking talents, Brown released a Summa Vineyard Pinot Noir beginning in 2002. In 2004, the warm weather at harvest led to early picking and wines which are the most concentrated to date. In 2005, however, much of the fruit at Summa Vineyard did not ripen due to poor coastal growing conditions. In his cellar, Brown has a single barrel of old vines and two barrels of younger vines juice. The Occidental Vineyard gave a little more and he now has six barrels of wine from the vintage aging. Come bottling time, there will be less than 200 cases to go around. That's just a fact of life when farming Pinot Noir on the edge in cool climates.



Further details are sketchy and I have not personally sampled the wines. This year the 2004 vintage was offered through a paper mailer and online to a mailing list. Visit the web site at [www.riversmarie.com](http://www.riversmarie.com) to sign up for future vintages.