

**Too Much of
Good Pinot is
Barely Enough**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotaficionados

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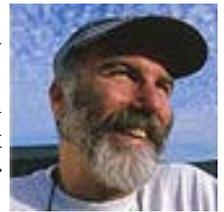
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Sanctuary Pinot Noir Debuts

Fetzer Vineyards has been undergoing significant changes with its Valley Oaks Hospitality Center in Upland closing on May 29, 2006. The site had incorporated a tasting room, marketplace and an Inn. The closure is a result of a redirection of marketing. Fetzer will continue to farm 105 acres but will be closed to the public. Brown-Forman Wines, the parent company of Fetzer, will still farm vineyards and produce wines on another 767 acres that it owns, including a winery, in Hopland.

Dennis Martin has been the Director of Winemaking at Fetzer since 1992. He has a hand in creating all of the Fetzer Vineyard wines, from premium varietals to the Fetzer Reserve Collection. Martin firmly believes that quality wines shouldn't be reserved just for special occasions and that consumers should expect satisfaction whether they choose a moderately price or higher priced wine. He strives for a minimalist approach and letting the grapes express their character without being over manipulated. Martin is known as a master blender and he has been able to use this ability to produce consistent wines, vintage to vintage.



Martin's new pet project has been launched with the release of his **Sanctuary 2004 Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** (14.3% alc., 370 cases, \$36). He has had a working relationship with the Miller family of the famed Bien Nacido Vineyard since the first planting of Pinot Noir in 1973. Pinot Noir from Bien Nacido carries a legendary pedigree. Of the 230 acres of Pinot Noir planted here, Martin's focus is on Blocks N, G, and Q, planted principally to the Pommard clone. The 2004 vintage was a challenge and yields were low but the resultant flavors were concentrated and generous complexity showed in the fruit. The grapes were fermented in open-top French oak barrels. Just prior to crush, one picking tub of whole grapes was gently placed in the bottom of the barrel. After punch-down, the wine was returned to the same barrel for secondary fermentation. Primarily Francois Freres French oak was used, 60% new and 40% once-used. The wine was left to age for 15 months, when the best lots were selected for this debut release. This is not a cookie-cutter Pinot Noir like so many - it has distinction. The exotic nose includes cooked cherries, burnt toffee and spice. The flavors remind me of an argula salad with strawberries and cherries (there is a subtle note of pepper so typical of Bien Nacido which reminded me of argula). Lush and voluptuous, but elegant and balanced, this is a complete Pinot. Impressive debut.

Jim Caudill of Brown Forman Wines said that most of this Pinot Noir will go to restaurant accounts, most notably Ruth's Chris Steak Houses. Limited retail sales. No direct sales.

For more details, contact Jim Caudill at 415-444-7410 in San Rafael, CA or e-mail him at Jim_Caudill@B-F.com

Summerland Winery

This negociant type winery has burst onto the Central Coast wine landscape since its founding by Nebil “Bilo” Zarif in 2001. Zarif was previously the owner of Barnwood Vineyards which he started in 1994. He initially purchased 30 acres of land in the Cuyama Valley in Santa Barbara County and built the property to 800 acres of vineyards. He also acquired the Maison Deutz Winery as a silent partner which became Laetitia. In 2001, he sold his interest in both Barnwood and Laetitia and founded Summerland Winery. As a resident of Summerland, a hillside community overlooking the Santa Barbara Channel just south of Santa Barbara, it was natural to name his new venture after his beloved home community. He opened a quaint tasting room in Summerland at 2330 Lillie Ave which is open to the public Tuesday thru Sunday from 11-6.



Zarif brought talented winemaker, Etienne Terlinden (pictured right), with him from Barnwood and Laetitia. Terlinden acquired an appreciation for wine at an early age, playing hide-and-seek in his grandfather’s wine cellar at his home outside of Brussels, Belgium. He also makes wine for his own label, Cordon, a boutique Rhone wine label, and The Santa Maria Winery. All winemaking is done at Central Coast Wine Services in Santa Maria, California. Despite contrasting lifestyles, (Zarif is an avid polo player and Terlinden is a surfer) they have formed a highly successful partnership. At the recent 16th Annual Wine Literary Awards sponsored by the Wine Appreciation Guild in San Francisco, Summerland Winery was given the award for “Best New Winery.”



Summerland is an ambitious operation with yearly output in the 10,000-15,000 case range. When I stopped in at the tasting room in March of this year, there were multiple varietals offered in addition to Pinot Noir, including Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Viognier, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Sirah, and Syrah. Most of the wines are sourced from Santa Barbara County and are labeled the “Central Coast Collection” (A **2004 Summerland Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** that is blended from several vineyards is available for \$20). Of more interest to me was the “Single Vineyard Collection” of Pinot Noirs. These wines are crafted in small lots, aged primarily in French oak, and produced in limited quantities. The bottle number is printed on the front of every label. They are bottled in some of the heaviest Burgundy styled bottles I have ever encountered - heck, you could use full bottles for barbells. In all four single vineyard Pinot Noirs I tasted, there was great consistency of style with purity of fruit, soft tannins, and impeccable balance. That said, it was only the Fiddlestix Vineyard bottling from the Santa Rita Hills that I went ga-ga over.

2003 Summerland Winery Chamisal Vineyard Edna Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 630 cases, \$33. The most light-bodied of the lineup. Not terribly complex, but attractive flavors of cherries, earth and oak with a hint of spice. Very mello with air time and excellent with grilled chicken.



2004 Summerland Winery Bien Nacido Vineyard Block T Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 800 cases, \$40. This proven and celebrated vineyard sits on a bench overlooking the Santa Maria River, and benefits greatly from a strong marine influence. The grapes for this wine came from the oldest section of vines, planted to Clone 22 in 1973. Pommard is also planted here, in between the old

vine rows. Winemaking was traditional for all of the Pinot Noirs here, with an initial cold soak followed by fermentation in 1.5 ton open top fermenters, punch down by hand, inoculated yeast, and aging in 100% Francois Freres cooperage (1/3 new) for 11 months. Lovely aromas of cherries and cranberries are duplicated in the flavors with a touch of pepper, Just the right touch of refined acidity. I wanted to nibble on this one.

2004 Summerland Winery Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 300 cases, \$40. The Santa Rosa Vineyard has 59 micro blocks creating a slew of diversity. A variety of clones are included here such as 2A, Pommard, 667 and 777. I think I caught this wine in a funk (unfortunately, I only had one bottle to taste). There were no defects, but the flavors were simple and the wine lacked any heart and soul. A shy nose offered cherries, vanilla and a touch of distillate. The dark fruit flavors were flat. This is the tricky part of Pinot Noir: it can be beautiful as a rose one week and disjointed and pouty the next.

2004 Summerland Winery Fiddlestix Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 425 cases, \$48. Kathy Joseph's 133 acre Fiddlestix Vineyard is considered one of the finest sites for producing Pinot Noir in the Santa Rita Hills. Grapes for this Pinot were Pommard, 113, 667, and 777 clones picked at optimum ripeness and flavors at harvest. The wine has a beautiful dark violet robe. The aromas and flavors of this wine make me think of blackberry jam thickly spread on a hearty piece of toast. There is plenty of spice, some plums as well, and a hint of forest floor. Soft, ripe tannins caress the fruit. It is very plush and silky, and beautifully balanced. The fruity finish lingers for at least ten seconds. As Mick Jagger would say, "It's only Pinot Noir, but I like it."

These well-crafted wines have good retail distribution in California. They may be purchased on the website at www.summerlandwine.com or by phoning 805-565-WINE (9463).

Pinot "Legs"

"She's got legs, she knows how to use them"

Legs, ZZ Top

I was tasting wine with several others awhile back and one of them exclaimed after swirling their glass: "This wine has great legs." Now this is often interpreted as a compliment or a confirmation of quality, but the truth is, the so called "legs" that are observed on the inside of the wine glass are related to the alcohol level and not in any way to the quality. In fact, what one is really saying is that "This wine has plenty of alcohol." The higher the alcohol, the more noticeable are the legs.

According to Emile Peynaud writing in the classic book, *The Taste of Wine*, when you swirl a wine glass, a clear film creeps up the sides of the glass above the wine's surface and forms droplets which then fall back. Often called legs, they also are referred to as tears, arches or arcs. The Germans called them *Kirchenfenster* or church window because they look like Gothic arches. The scientific basis for legs is the "Marangoni effect." Alcohol is more volatile than water and the alcohol (not glycerin as many wine drinkers claim) condenses on the glass.

Wine has a number of other anatomic parts including a "nose" and "body." The nose refers to aromas (smelled in young wines) and bouquet (smells acquired with aging). Body refers to the concentration of a wine. A substantial wine is said to have "good body." Be careful with the use of this phrase, for "a good body" means something entirely different. Sugar, alcohol, glycerol and tannins contribute to the body of a wine. Remember that a full-bodied wine does not necessarily equate with quality. Pinot Noir may wear a "robe" as well. This term is frequently used to refer to the color or shade of the wine.

What Gives Pinot Noir That Sensuous Mouthfeel?

“The basis of taste is texture, above all”

Chef Guy Savoy

When you drink Pinot Noir, what most attracts you to the sensuous qualities of this varietal? It is hard to argue against the beguiling aromatics which have been described as “connected intrinsically with the fecund world of the forest floor, mushrooms, animals and the farmyard which suggests an amorous romp with a buxom maiden in a sun-dappled clearing” (*Wine X*). Or maybe you prefer the seductive flavors that seem so indescribable and many wax poetic about: “As the wine rose to our lips, we were vertiginously winched up to a more rarified plateau. It was as if we had just left the harbor and entered the sea, as if the clouds had parted and the sky had colored lavender and wraithlike little sprites were dancing on the surface of the water. Now *this* is Pinot Noir” (Miles in ‘Sideways’). Perhaps it is the aftertaste of noble tannins that rings most true in your memory. For me, it might just be the mouth feel of a great Pinot Noir, a sensation that is simultaneously sensual and cerebral: “Beautiful wines have great texture - you want to play with it - roll it around in the mouth” (Eric Asimov, *New York Times*).

I wanted to learn more about mouth feel so I hit the books and read everything I could find.. It turns out, mouthfeel properties of wine have received little attention. An article in *Food Science & Technology* (J.Guinard and R. Mazzucchelli, Vol 6, July 1996) provided some basic definitions. Although mouthfeel and texture are often used interchangeably, the authors state that “texture usually refers to solid and semi-solid foods, while mouthfeel includes all of the tactile properties perceived from the time at which a solid, semi-solid or liquid food or beverages are placed in the mouth until they are swallowed. Residual mouthfeel effects (ie, astringency) are often included under the general term afterfeel, in the same way that the term aftertaste is used to refer to residual taste sensations.” The sensory modalities responsible for perceiving mouthfeel in wine are specialized nerve endings in mechanoreceptors of the palate, tongue and gums. It is known that preferences for mouthfeel vary greatly among tasters.

Eric Asimov approached this subject in a article in the January 10, 2006 *New York Times*, titled “The Indescribable Texture of Wine.” He was unable to find a satisfactory definition (the word texture is not in the *Oxford Companion to Wine*), and noted that wine experts have great difficulty in agreeing on what to call the texture or mouthfeel of wine. He quoted Richard Geoffrey, cellar master for Dom Perignon, who told him that for him the quest for proper texture was the supreme goal of winemaking. “That feel, that chew, that third dimension. That’s really what I’m working on.” Geoffrey went on to define mouthfeel as “a conveyor belt that carries aromatic and flavor compounds through the mouth from sip to swallow and beyond.” No specific explanations were given.

Wine critics talk about mouthfeel, winemakers know it is desirable, but how do you get it? Noted Pinot Noir winegrower, Merry Edwards, in speaking about Russian River Valley Pinot Noir says that “It’s a kaleidoscope of bold, succulent fruit, Bing cherry and Santa Rosa plums, with lavender, violets and a bit of cola and chocolate. But the biggest difference is the voluptuous texture. I’ve had a fixation on that my whole career.” The quest for mouthfeel has had a major influence on winemaking. Polysaccharides are large molecules suspended in wine, that give wine more physical presence and increased textural richness. Picking riper grapes enhances the polysaccharide content of wine. Fining and filtration are usually avoided for they separate polysaccharides from the juice. Lees contact allows the release of a polysaccharide called mannoprotein that gives wine a creamier mouthfeel.

There are multiple factors at play that produce a sensuous mouthfeel. Viscosity is largely secondary to alcohol, sugar and tannin. Glycerol is often mentioned as a contributing factor, but Alex Hunt writing

In *The World of Fine Wine* (The Foundations of Structure and Texture, Issue 9, 2005), states that “glycerol is misunderstood for it is never in sufficient quantity to contribute to texture.”

Perhaps the most critical insight to mouthfeel has come recently from studies done by researchers at the University of Adelaide, Australia, and the University of California, Davis. They have recently identified an enzyme in grapes (Pinot Noir) that helps convert vitamin C into tartaric acid. Tartaric acid is the most abundant acid found in grapes. It plays a significant role in the taste, color, longevity and mouthfeel of wine. It can sometimes be seen as crystals in the wine or deposited on the wine bottle's cork. It is relatively rare in other fruits and, unlike other fruit acids, is synthesized from vitamin C instead of sugars. By understanding better how grapes make tartaric acid, winegrowers can influence the mouthfeel of the finished wine.

The importance of mouthfeel to red wine quality and acceptance has led the Australian Wine Research Institute to create a Red Wine Mouthfeel Wheel modeled after the aroma and taste wheels for wine and other foods. The principal developer was Richard Gawel. The wheel lists 53 terms that may be used to describe the complex range of mouthfeel sensations elicited by red wines. The wheel was created after hundreds of wines were tasted by Australia's most experienced red winemakers, red wine researchers and wine educators. There are some interesting terms on the wheel such as chalky, furry, and grippy. The wheel was published in the *Australian Journal of Grape and Wine Research* (Vol 6, No 3, 2000). Laminated, A4 sized, full color copies of the mouthfeel wheel can be obtained from the Australian Society of Viticulture and Oenology (www.asvo.com.au). The mouthfeel wheel can also be ordered for \$9 at www.bookofjoe.com.

Wine Review Software for the Pocket PC

Remember the last Pinot Noir walk-around tasting you attended. In one hand you had a wine glass and napkin, in the other a pencil and program of wineries and you ended up scribbling tasting notes on the napkin, a scrap of paper and in the margins of the program. Later when you went back to review them, they were often illegible or lost over the ensuing interval.

Groundspace Corporation has developed the Wine Notes program that runs on a Pocket PC. It allows the user to collect tasting notes by a simple touch and tap operation and features a built-in aroma chart (they should build in a mouthfeel chart - see above). The entries can be easily reviewed and sorted and exported to Excel.



The software was written in conjunction with Patty who authors *Patty's Pinot Closet* newsletter at www.pinotnoirs.com. I have seen her use it at wine judging events and it looks to be quick and sensible. For more information, www.groundspace.com or www.pocketwinenotes.com. Hewlett Packard IPAQ Pocket PCs may also be purchased with the Wine Notes software in place.

Corkscrewed T-Shirts are Irreverent

Maria Hudak and Jody Garrison created Corkscrewed, a line of wine-themed T-shirts which poke fun at wineries, scores and wine critics. The original slogans include: “Those who can make great wines do. Those who can't **rate them!**” and “A great wine is not measured by a score, but rather, by the intentions with which it was made and the joy with which it is imbibed” and “Pour me a Pinot, put on some Miles, and maybe my headache will go away” and “WWBD - What Would Bacchus Do?” and finally, “I slept with a wine critic. He (or she) was unyielding, lacked complexity and was imminently forgettable.”

The line of Corkscrewed apparel is available on the internet at www.corkscrewedtees.com.


PrinceofPinot.com

Roger Capitan once called Pinot Noir a *'bete a chagrin'*, a 'woeful beast.'

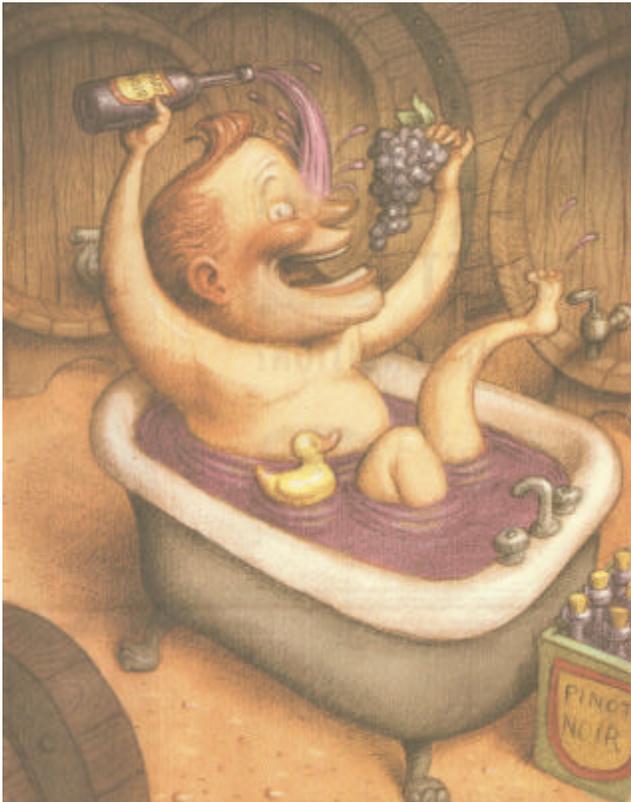
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Cloudy Bay viticulturist Sioban Harnett writing in the newsletter of Cape Mentelle and Cloudy Bay confesses that she "starts reading too much into the vines. I've started to think they have personalities, traits - why, even mortal sins!" She ascribed a Deadly Sin to each of the varietals planted at Cloudy Bay (New Zealand). For Pinot Noir her comments are very apropos:

"Lust. Coy and coquettish, pinot tosses its second set while ruby-red bunches steal glances from under its leaves. We know where this one will end up. I hope you brought protection."

Publish Your Best Pinot Story in the PinotFile



Write a short article, maximum 800 words, on any Pinot Noir-related subject. How about your Pinot Noir epiphany? What Pinot Noir did you use to seduce your current mate? (no Pinot porn please) What tasting room experience was memorable or forgettable? What is your favorite snack foods with Pinot Noir? Where is the strangest place you drank a good Pinot? Have you ever bathed in Pinot Noir like the Prince? The article could even be scholarly and serious and have some educational value.

All entries, if published, will be suitable attributed to the author, or if you prefer, will be published anonymously. The best article (the judging panel consists of the Prince) will receive a collectable *PinotFile* T-shirt suitable for Pinot stains and baseball cap, and one bottle of ultra-premium Pinot Noir shipped free. Please submit the entries by e-mail through the *PinotFile* website at www.princeofpinot.com. Deadline is August 1, 2006.