

**If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 6, Issue 7

December 4, 2006

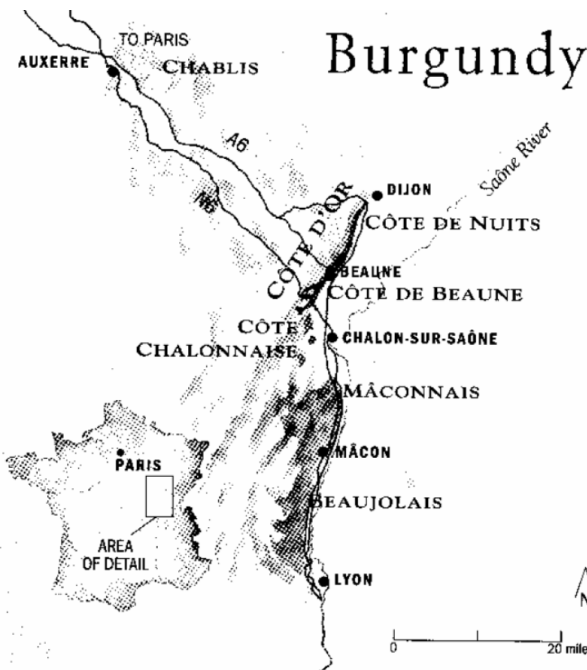
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Look to Dujac for Burgundy Epiphany

I am no expert on Burgundy, but I know great Burgundy when I find it. Domaine de la Romanee Conti, Comte de Vogue, Leroy, Rousseau, and others have their following, but Dujac really makes my tastes buds stand erect. I have sat in on several Burgundy tastings over the last year, and every time, it is a Dujac wine that is the diva. In the puzzling and confusing maize of Burgundy producers, Dujac is one domaine that you can single out as a consistent star whose wines, although difficult to come by and not inexpensive, are priced sensibly considering the quality.

If you really want to know Burgundy, you need to memorize about 4,000 domaine names, take a course in French pronunciation, and expect to get lost in the maze of appellations (120) and soil types (59) beneath the Cote d'Or. The Cote stretches only about 31 miles, but it seems like more because it is so fragmented. After you get your bearings, you then must prepare yourself to part with a good chunk of change. Buying Burgundy is like buying designer wine - you pay for the name. The smaller the appellation, the rarer the wine, the higher the price.



There are actually five main growing regions in Burgundy (from north to south they are Chablis, Cote d'Or, Cote Chalonnaise, Maconnais, and Beaujolais), but for Pinot Noir enthusiasts, the Cote d'Or ("coat door") is the hallowed land. The name Cote d'Or stands for the "Golden Slope" that extends south from Dijon to Chagny. The gentle southeast facing slope captures considerable sunlight from very long summer days. The best vineyards are half-way up the slope, like meat in the middle of a sandwich. The lower vineyards have too much clay in the soil and the upper vineyards are too windy.

The Cote d'Or is divided into the Cote de Nuits in the north and the Cote de Beaune in the south. The Cote de Nuits has 24 Grand Crus, 138 Premier Crus, and 462 producers. 90% of the wine is red, 10% white. The Cote de Beaune has 8 Grand Crus, 228 Premier Crus, and 903 producers. 70% of production is red, 30% white. The historic division is not due to differences in the character of the wines. For example, Pommard, which is in the Cote de Beaune, shares a commonality with Chambertin

which is in the Cote de Nuits (both are rich, robust, rustic and require aging), and Chambolle-Musigny in the Cote de Nuits has more in common with Volnay in the Cote de Beaune (both are softer, silkier).

In Burgundy there are two red grapes (Pinot Noir and Gamay) and three white (Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Beurot). Gamay may be included in Bourgogne wines from the Cote d'Or and is the grape of Beaujolais.

In Burgundy, the land, not the producer is classified. Quality is based on geographic possibility, not the quality in the bottle. In Bordeaux, in contrast, the chateaux names are brand names and the top names are classified. In Burgundy, the appellations dictate the classification and labeling. The appellations from lowest to highest: *General* (Bourgogne rouges and blancs from grapes grown anywhere in Burgundy; 2/3 of Burgundy production); *Regional* (ie Cote de Nuits); *Regional plus the word villages* (grapes from one or more designated villages, ie Cote de Nuits Villages); *Villages* (ie Pommard; there are 8 villages in the Cote de Nuits and 20 in the Cote de Beaune; 20% of Burgundy production); *Premier Cru* (label contains name of village and a vineyard with recognized official status; ie Vosne-Romanee Les Suchots ; there are 426 Premier Cru vineyards in the Cote d'Or; 10% of Burgundy production); and *Grand Cru* (a vineyard with recognized official status of the highest quality that need only use the name of the vineyard since it is assumed you know where the vineyard is; ie La Tache; there are 32 Grand Cru vineyards in the Cote d'Or; 1% of Burgundy production).

The most expensive agricultural real estate in the world is the 5 miles stretch from Vosne-Romanee north to Gevrey-Chambertin. This stretch has more Grand Cru vineyards than any other comparable land in Burgundy. Vosne-Romanee is considered the greatest Pinot Noir village on earth. There are 8 Grand Crus (La Romanee, La Tache, Romanee-Conti, Romanee St.-Vivant, Echezeaux, Grands Echezeaux, and La Grand Rue). There are 13 Premier Crus (11 are outstanding and 2 - Les Rouges and En Orveaux are actually in neighboring Flagey-Echezeaux - Les Suchots, les Chaumes, Les Brulees, Clos-de-Reas, Aux Malconsorts, Les Petits Monts, Aux Reignots, Les Beaux-Monts, Cros-Parantoux, Les Gaudichots, En Orveaux, La Croix-Rameau, and Les Rouges).



The vineyards in Burgundy do not have single owners like in California and Oregon. The vineyards in Burgundy are "climats," land divided among a number of individual owners. Some owners may have only a few vines in a row. None of the vines are marked out for owners know which are theirs. There are very few monopoles (a vineyard owned solely by one owner). The fact that there are several owners in a single vineyard means you must pay attention to the owner/producer more than the vineyard name. The vineyard name *only* indicates potential.

Nothing is for sure in Burgundy. The spellings of vineyard names may take several forms. The number of Premier Cru vineyards is not certain and several Premier Cru vineyards make better wine than some Grand Cru vineyards. Because vintages in Burgundy vary wildly due to fluctuations in climate from year to year, it is important to pay attention to the vintage. But it is equally vital that you know the producers. Top producers, like Dujac, make quality wines at all appellation levels and in most vintages.

Learning about Burgundy is a challenge since there are few comprehensive references available. The two published standard texts are valuable sources of basic information but are outdated: *The Great Domains of Burgundy* by Remington Norman (1998), and *Cote D'Or* by Clive Coates M.W. (1997). For more current information, I would recommend Allen Meadows' website and newsletter, *Burghound.com*, and the website, *burgundy-report.com*. The best education comes from tasting the wines of Burgundy.

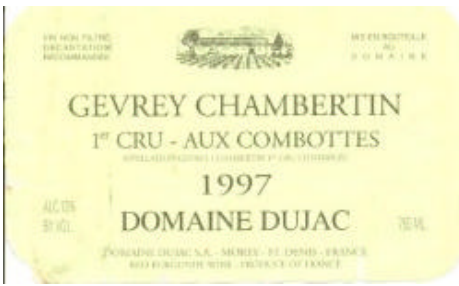
One comment on prices. The price of Burgundy at auction has shot up 370% in the past decade according to figures reported in the *Wine Spectator*. Many wealthy collectors are now favoring Burgundy over Bordeaux because of its rarity. Obtaining older vintages of Burgundy at auction is pretty much hopeless for all but the most wealthy wine enthusiasts. Because of the devaluation of the American dollar, prices for Burgundy have leaped up since the 2003 vintage. We have saved the French in two World Wars, given them McDonalds, Coke, Mickey Mouse and Jerry Lewis, and what do they do for us? They charge us ridiculous prices for their wine. The key is to look for village vines and Premier Crus from good vintages from good producers. There are many good wines to be found in the \$35-\$85 price range.

The story of Jacques Seysses and Domaine Dujac is well detailed in Clive Coates' excellent book. Jacques Seysses' wealthy father (he owned Biscuits Belin) bought Domaine Marcel Graillet in Morey-Saint-Denis for his son in 1967. A new domaine was essentially created from scratch and was of high promise from the beginning. Immediately Seysses looked to acquire vineyard land to expand the initial 4.5 ha. The first vintage was in 1968, which he sold off in bulk. The next vintage, 1969, was one of the finest ever at the domaine. He married in 1973, and decided to leave the family business permanently for a career in winemaking. By 1997, the domaine owned 11.5 ha in 11 appellations. Besides village Chambolle-Musigny and Vosne-Romanee, the Premier Crus include Gevrey-Chambertain Les Combottes, Chambolle-Musigny Les Gruenchers, Vosne-Romanee Les Beaux Monts, and Grand Crus Clos-de-la Roche, Clos-Saint-Denis, Charmes Chambertain, Bonnes Mares, and Echezeaux. More recently, Allen Meadows reports that Seysses, in partnership with a number of investors, has purchased 30+ ha of vineyard land from Domaine Thomas-Moillard including some Chambertin, Romanee St.-Vivant, Malconsorts (still uncertain), and more Bonnes Mares and Les Beaux Monts. The first vintage from the new vineyards will be in 2005. There is also a small negociant operation, Maison Dujac Fils et Père, which is managed by Jacques' son, Jeremy. The wines are made from purchased grapes from various village level appellations and are also of high quality.



What makes Domaine Dujac wines so special? Jacques Seysses was one of the first to recognize the importance of clones which he prefers over *selection massale*. Early on, he did considerable replanting with clones. He employs fastidious green harvests. His vineyard manager has been Christophe Marin since 1987. He vinifies with 100% stems and whole bunches, low-temperature fermentations, cultured yeasts, and nearly all new Allier French oak. Maybe it is what he doesn't do that matters. He says, "I see myself as a doctor. I'm there in case of trouble. But I am not there to change nature."

At a tasting of 1990 Burgundies last year, with many Grand Crus present, the Dujac Chambolle-Musigny Les Gruenchers was clearly the finest wine. More recently at a tasting of 15 Burgundies from 1996 to 1999 vintages, the 1997 Dujac Gevrey-Chambertain Les Combottes (Premier Cru) and the 1999 Dujac Clos de la Roche (Grand Cru) were the standouts. My notes on Les Combottes say "drinking beautifully, especially notable lingering finish featuring sandalwood and caramel." On the Clos de la Roche I said, "gorgeous nose, makes me want to dive in, big, young, intense but silky smooth, perfect balance, infanticide." More recently I attended a tasting organized by Greg Saunders, winemaker at White Rose Vineyards in Oregon. We tasted blind 3 vintages of DRC Richebourg (2000, 2001, 2002) and 3 producers of Clos de la Roche from the 2002 vintage (Drouhin, Dujac, Laurent). The tasting was part of an ongoing project of Greg's to follow the development of Grand Cru wines over their evolution through the years. The Dujac Clos de la Roche was an outrageous wine that clearly overshadowed every other wine in the tasting by my measure (and the opinion of several others). Some of the comments on the wine were, "voluptuous nose of cherry, spice, cinnamon, rich structure of red and blue fruits, impeccable balance, taste lingered, iron minerality, plentiful ripe tannins, delicious, perfect length, would overshadow any food" and so on and so on.



Domaine Dujac wines are distributed in the United States by Wilson-Daniels Ltd and Chambers & Chambers (Southern California). The 1999 and 2002 vintages were unrivaled. For the 2004 vintage, which Jacques Sessy characterizes as “good but not great,” Morey-Saint-Denis and Chambolle-Musigny Villages are priced around \$50, the Premier Crus from \$110 to \$150, and the Grand Crus \$150-225. Do not ignore so-called off years like 1997 and 2000 where the wines are considerably less expensive but still charming. Finding the wines can take some research but

a good wine retailer can be invaluable here. Winezap.com and wine-searcher.com are very helpful.

Vergari Wines

I recently met David Vergari, an engaging winemaker with an impressive lineup of Pinot Noirs. David grew up in an Italian family where homemade wine was a way of life. It wasn't until he attended college at U.C. Berkeley that he found out that white wine existed! He went on to get an MBA, but by the late 1980s decided he really wanted to pursue a career in winemaking. He attended U.C. Davis from 1989 to 1991 with many of his classmates who are distinguished winemakers today. After graduating, he headed to Australia to work under James Halliday at Coldstream Hills. I asked him how he happened to choose that course and he replied, “Anyone dumb enough to buy a ticket and work for peanuts could do it.” It turned out to be the foundation of his practical wine knowledge for he spent countless hours drinking wine from Halliday's 30,000 bottle cellar. He went on to gain experience in Europe and then in California at Phelps where he worked for 4 years. Finally, in 2003 he decided to pursue the dream of most winemakers, his own label, and started Vergari Wines.

I tasted through three Vergari Pinot Noirs over lunch. Each of the wines was distinctive and I like that David's wines reflect their vineyard source and do not replicate a mirror-image style. Winemaking is essentially by hand, with minimal movement from crushing until bottling. A cold soak is followed by fermentation with native yeast for both primary and malolactic. The wines are barrel aged (1/3 each new, once-filled and neutral barrels) on fine lees for approximately 11 months.

2004 Vergari Van der Kamp Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 104 cases, \$39. The Van der Kamp Vineyard is located at an elevation of 2100 and is composed of heritage clones and Dijon 777. This Pinot has been slow to come around and wasn't released until 1 year after bottling. The wine is burgundy in color and mildly cloudy (David chose not to filter, preferring to preserve the delicate flavors). There is an attractive perfume of spiced cherry-rhubarb pie. The wine is sleek and refined on the palate with elegant fruit flavors underpinned with wet leaf and mushroom notes. The tannins are supple and the finish is clean and lively.



2004 Vergari Dunah Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 206 cases, \$39. The Dunah Vineyard is located southwest of Sebastopol in the Russian River Valley appellation. The location is very cool, with sugars not exceeding 24 degree Brix. The clones are Pommard, and Dijon 115, 777.

Rick and Diane DuNah meticulously farm this vineyard, and besides their own label, have supplied grapes to Flowers and Williams Selyem. This is a darker and richer Pinot Noir than the other two in the lineup. The scents of black cherries, toast, licorice and roasted nuts are alluring. Dark fruits and forest floor flavors coat the palate. The lengthy finish has herbal and oak notes and a slight bitterness. This wine really sings with food which smoothes out and highlights the fruit on the backend.

2005 Vergari Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 162 cases, \$ not released. This vineyard is located on the Santa Rosa Plain in Sonoma County in the cool Sonoma Coast appellation. Clones are Pommard and Dijon 115, 777. The wine was decanted. Bright, medium ruby robe. A spicy nose to die for. A wine of great finesse that reveals itself slowly with many complex layers of Pinot fruits, spice, herbs, and saffras. The texture is all silk and caresses the palate like satin. I feel a glow just thinking about this wine. Great!

Vergari wines can be purchased directly from David at 626-818-8398 or by e-mailing him at vergari-wines@verizon.net. Look for the wines in some retail outlets and on better restaurants lists. David brings years of winemaking experience to his much-cherished new venture and his initial efforts show cause for much optimism for the future.

Small Sips of Pinot

- ?? Overproduction of wine, decreased demand for exports, and reduced consumption at home have vigneron in France selling their juice, even bottled wine, to ethanol plants for conversion to automobile fuel. According to the December issue of *Food Arts*, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah offer the best miles-per-gallon (45 highway, 35 city), while Merlot and Petit Verdot ranked last (17 highway, 9 city). Muscadet has performed poorly on the road but is a good radiator coolant. No word on Pinot Noir.
- ?? One of the latest innovations for bars and restaurants is serving wine directly from a keg. This allows wine to be served at a lower cost, with no concerns of corked bottles. Cuvée, a restaurant in Sonoma, offers up to 12 wines on tap, including Pinot Noir from owner Roger Roessler's Roessler Cellars.
- ?? Michael Mondavi family purchased Carneros Creek Winery this summer and will produce wines for the Hangtime, I'M Wine and Oberon brands there. Also, Scott Wright, of Scott Paul Winery in Carlton, Oregon, is making about 1,500 cases of Oregon Pinot Noir for the I'M label.
- ?? Currently, 80% of California wine production is controlled by less than ten producers. But the high-revenue wines over fifteen dollars a bottle, including most Pinot Noir, is almost completely owned by small producers.
- ?? Lookout Ridge Winery owner Gordon Holmes will donate a wheelchair to a person in need, in the buyer's name, for each case of wine purchased. Holmes' wife has multiple sclerosis and needs a wheelchair to get around. Lookout Ridge began in 2000 and noted winemaker Greg La Follette makes the winery's Pinot Noir. Lookout Ridge has been named "The Next Generation Cult Wine." The wines are sold exclusively through a mailing list at www.lookoutridge.com.
- ?? *Wine Spectator* recently named "The Magnificent 30 Pinot Noir Producers." They were: Aubert, Bonaccorsi Wine Company, Chasseur, Clos Pepe Vineyards, Domaine Alfred, DuMol, Merry Edwards Wines, Failla, Freeman Vineyard & Winery, Goldeneye Winery, Paul Hobbs, Kistler Vineyards, Kosta Browne Winery, Littorai, Loring Wine Company, MacPhail, Marcassin, Martinelli Winery, Peter Michael Winery, Mueller, The Ojai Vineyard, Papapietro Perry, Patz & Hall, Roar, Sea Smoke Cellars, Siduri, W.H. Smith Wines, Talley Vineyards, Vision Cellars, and Williams Selyem.

Show Me the Way to Sta. Rita Hills

The Sta. Rita Hills appellation is quite unique among wine growing regions in California. Most of the producers who own vineyards in the region make their wine elsewhere, often in Lompoc. The Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance website (www.staritahills.com) has an excellent map showing the major vineyards in the appellation, but omitting for the most part the location of the winemaking facilities. This can create quite a bit of confusion for Pinot enthusiasts bent on visiting their favorite winemakers. Even the label websites often do not provide adequate information. I have made a stab at some clarification and I hope you find this of use in planning a trip to the region. Most tasting is done by appointment and for a more personal experience, I would recommend an appointment even for those wineries with tasting rooms. I have only included Pinot Noir producers. Many of the producer's wines are also offered in tasting rooms in neighboring Solvang and Los Olivos.

Large wineries with vineyards and tasting rooms:

Babcock Winery & Vineyards 5175 Hwy 46, Lompoc. 805-736-1455. Tasting room 10-4 Fri-Sun.

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery 6121 E Hwy 46, Lompoc. 805-688-8554. 3,500 sq ft hospitality center and tasting room adjacent to the winery open 10-5 daily.

Lafond Winery & Vineyards 6885 Santa Rosa Rd, Buellton. 805-715-2819 Tasting room open 10-5 daily.

Melville Vineyards & Winery 5185 E Hwy 46, Lompoc. 805-735-7030. Tasting room open 11-4 daily.

Sanford Winery & Vineyards 805-688-3300. Tasting room is in an old dairy barn at 7250 Santa Rosa Rd, Buellton and is open 11-4 (winter) and 11-5 (summer).

Wineries in the Sobhani "wine ghetto," an industrial park located in the city of Lompoc near the end of Hwy 46. All require an appointment to visit and taste, except Fiddlehead, which has a tasting room open Thurs-Sunday 11-4. Phone numbers are on the Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance website.

Brewer-Clifton, Fiddlehead, Flying Goat (taste at Wine Country in Los Olivos), **Gypsy Canyon, Huber Cellars, La Vie, Longoria, Presidio, Prodigal, Samsara, Sea Smoke, Stolpman.**

Wineries in northwest edge of the city of Lompoc in an industrial building known as the "Pinot Prison" because it sits on a road close to the prison. 1600 block of W Central Ave. All require an appointment to visit and taste. **Ampelos/Ken Brown, AP Vin, Cargasacchi, Pali Wine Co.**

Others:

Alma Rosa The tasting room is located in a small industrial park space at 201-C Industrial Way, Buellton and is open 11-4 daily. 805-688-9090.

Casa Cassara Winery is located off Hwy 246 on a private road. By appt only. Some wines available at The Olive House in Solvang. Contact Alicia Summers at 805-350-0627.

Clos Pepe Vineyards Vineyard located at 4777 E Hwy 246, Lompoc. Tours and tasting by appt. Wine-making at custom crush facility in Buellton. Excellent website (www.clospepe.com) with comprehensive information about the Sta. Rita Hills appellation. 805-735-2196

Demetria Estate Formerly Ashley's Vineyard, now Gaia Vineyard is in Sta. Rita Hills. Business address is 6701 Foxen Canyon Rd, Los Olivos. 805-686-2345.

Michael Grace Wines 1125 W Barton Ave, Lompoc. 805-737-4095.

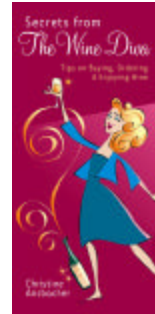
Rozak Ranch 4525 Hwy 246, Lompoc. 805-736-1184.

There are multiple members of the Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Association who source grapes from the appellation but whose winery is in another appellation - ie Arcadian, Carr Vineyards & Winery, Drew, Hitching Post.

Wine Books that will Lighten You Up

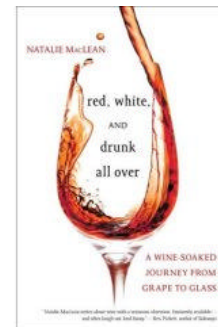
The latter part of every year brings a plethora of wine books. These books make excellent gifts for your pinotophile friends. Let's face it, they already have too much Pinot. Everyone can learn something from a book on wine, even the most basic beginner publications.

Secrets from The Wine Diva Paperback, 216 pp, Sterling (2006), \$15. Author Christine Ansbacher is a noted wine educator and entertainer whose corporate and social wine events are known for their theatrics as well as educational value. Her clients include American Express, Merrill Lynch and many prestigious private clubs on the East Coast. She is a Certified Wine Educator (CWE) who goes by the no deplume "The Wine Diva." Her moto (credited to Benjamin Franklin) is "Wine should be a laugh, not a lecture." This book is an attempt to demystify wine by giving the reader practical information that can be used in wine stores and restaurants. She devotes chapters to navigating restaurant wine lists, matching wine and food, avoiding the purchase of wine by price rather than quality and taste, and developing wine savvy for most any social occasion. The book is directed at the inexperienced wine consumer and a great stocking stuffer for wine newbies. The cover may turn away many macho male wine drinkers, but they will find real humor and enjoyment here once they open the pages. The book is currently being promoted with offers of many bonus gifts upon purchase at www.bestsellerpromotions.com/winedivasecrets/.



The Cork Jester;s Guide to Wine Paperback, 240 pp, Clarisy Press (2006), \$15. Still another humorous guide to tasting and enjoying wine. The author, Jennifer Rosen, says she, "can't make wine simple, but I can make it fun and beautiful, instead of esoteric and intimidating." There are many wine anecdotes, jokes and one-ups in this book which is directed at the intimidated wine drinker.

Red, White, and Drunk All Over: A Wine-Soaked Journey from Grape to Glass Hardcover, 288 pp, Bloomsbury (2006), \$18. Well-known Canadian wine writer, Natalie MacLean, weaves interviews of wine personalities from Burgundy grape growers to California's Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon in a humorous journey through the wine world. She has been referred to as the "George Plimpton of wine writers."



Marilyn Merlot and the Naked Grape Paperback, 256 pp, Quirk Books (2006), \$17. Author Peter F. May resides in England and in addition to writing and lecturing on wine, he runs the website, www.winelabels.org. This book has snippets of over 100 of the oddest wines ever produced. The original labels are reproduced in full color and the pictures are accompanied by stories of the wines and tasting notes. Included are wines like Cleavage Creek, The Dog's Bollocks, Fat Bastard, and Love My Goat.

A Hedonist in the Cellar Hardcover, 243 pp, Alfred A Knopf (2006), \$24. Author Jan McInerney has written seven novels including the recent *The Good Life*. He is the 2006 recipient of the James Beard Foundation's M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award. He has been praised by Robert M. Parker, Jr. and *The New York Times* for his wine books. This book is a collection of five years' worth of essays about what's new, what's enduring, and what's surprising in the world of wine. He covers the globe from the Finger Lakes of New York to Chile. There is keen insight about wine personalities such as Michael Broadbent and Randall Grahm and the so-called Ghetto Boys, Greg Brewer and Steve Clifton of California. The book ends with an epilogue on "What I Drank on My Forty-eighth Birthday."

PrinceofPinot.com

Now, go break out the good stuff

**If You Drink No Noir,
You Pinot Noir**

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The time and place of wine’s discovery by mankind are lost in the obscurity of perhaps a hundred centuries. It may have happened in pre-historic Persia; or perhaps on the slopes of Mt. Ararat, where, as the Old Testament tells us, Noah landed, and under his covenant from Yahweh was inspired to become a winegrower. And he enjoyed his wine, and as you know, his years on this earth were nine hundred and fifty.

Physicians have been prescribing wine - as we know from records in ancient Canaan and Cairo - for at least 5,000 years. And the immortals of healing, too, knew the wisdom of wine in therapy including Imhotep of Egypt and Apollo of Greece and Rome, Asclepius and his daughters Hygieia and Panacea in whose names the Oath of Hippocrates was sworn; not to mention such wine wise immortals as Moses, Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, Leonardo da Vinci, Fracastoro, Paracelsus, Vesalius, Harvey, Jenner, Florence Nightingale, Pasteur, Lister, Osler, and Randall Grahm.



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