

Crafting Pinot Noir is a Delicate Balance Between Risk and Reward

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Pinot Noir Trends in 2006

** Continued emergence of the “garagista” or “shedista” Pinot Noir winemaker. The story often goes like this: borrow some money, rent a small space that will hold some barrels, purchase a sorting table, a press, and some tanks, search the countryside for some precious Pinot Noir grapes that a grower is willing to sell and make your own Pinot Noir. A consulting winemaker is often overseeing the venture. These are frequently one-man operations and are truly “hands-on” from the design of the label, to the affixing of the label to the bottles, to the placement of the label in fine restaurants. To quote Jane Firstenfeld, writing in *Wines & Vines* (January, 2006), “Passion will not be denied, and every year, more than a handful of brave souls take heart in hand, lay their money down and take their chances starting new wineries.”

** Consumers and novice vintners, often in small groups, producing small lots of Pinot Noir in facilities such as Crushpad in San Francisco. Involvement can vary from internet directed preferences of the winemaking process to hands-on wine-making at the urban winery. It cannot be too much of a stretch to foresee established wineries becoming involved in this trend as well, allowing pinotphiles to assist in the crafting of a barrel or two of their own wine.

** Small wineries are finding more success with direct selling and it is projected that within a few years, direct sales will account for 50-100% of production.

** Pinot Noir sales are increasing, with most of the increase coming from smaller brands. High-revenue brands, those over \$15, are almost all relatively small brands.

** Modern technology is overcoming the advantages of structural gravity flow production of Pinot Noir. The beloved forklift has been the key to gravity flow of Pinot Noir in single-story wineries for years, but improved pumps that allow a gentle and careful regulation of flow will, in the words of Van Duzer winemaker Jim Kakacek, “prove to be a match for gravity.”

** There is still a lingering hangover of disdain for Merlot from the movie, ‘Sideways’. Syrah has become more popular in California and has been touted as the next great cult darling positioned to displace Pinot Noir. However this unlikely. As writer Jan McInerney said in his book, *A Hedonist in the Cellar*, “Syrah is on the verge of California stardom, but like that of actor Orlando Bloom, more promising than happening.”

The 4th Wine and Heart Health Summit will be held at the Silverado Resort in Napa Valley, February 14-17, 2007. The goal of the symposium is to enhance your understanding and appreciation of wine, wine-making, wine and food, and wine culture. It is open to all connoisseurs of wine, not just physicians. For complete information and registration go to winesummit.com.

** Wine press and wine critics are popularizing “Big Pinots,” a term that was unheard of just 10 years ago. To prove a point, a friend sent a Pinot Noir that scored 95 in the *Wine Spectator* to Vincor for analysis. It came back 16.8% alcohol and .66 gm residual sugar!! Remember, a wine labeled 14.8% alcohol can legally be 1 1/2% higher or 16.3% alcohol.

** According to *Wine Business Monthly*, the number of wineries in the United States has increased to 5,645 (as of November, 2006), including 4,383 bonded wineries and 1,587 non-bonded or “virtual” wineries. Virtual wineries are wine companies that make wine at someone else’s bonded wineries. According to the database of John Winthrop Haeger (author of *North American Pinot Noir*), there are more than 720 producers of Pinot Noir. I am currently collecting my own database and I believe the number of producers in California alone exceeds that number.

** The wine auction market is hot, particularly for Burgundy. United States wine auctions exceeded \$167 million in 2006. New York’s Acker Merrall & Condit leads in global sales. They racked up close to \$40 million in 2006. John Kapon, president of Acker Merrall & Condit, notes that top Burgundies such as Romanée-Conti, Roumier, de Vogue, and Coche-Dury, are now liquefied works of art.” At the September 16, 2006 wine auction held by Christie’s New York, 3 Jeroboams of 1988 Romanée-Conti went for \$94,000, nearly \$40,000 over the pre-auction estimate!

** The concept of wine directed at women has quickly cooled. Beringer Blass has discontinued their low-calorie Chardonnay for women, White Lies. The truth is that women are not interested in drinking wines that men wouldn’t drink. I should add as confirmation, that there are many women who sign up for the *PinotFile* - the ratio seems to be about 3 to 1, men to women.

** Sustainable principles are being applied increasingly to wineries as well as vineyards. Sustainable wineries have reduced operating costs, less electricity consumption, and more desirable working environments. The Carlton Winemaker’s Studio in the Willamette Valley was a pioneer in sustainable winery architecture.

** Small Pinot Noir winemakers are leasing blocks within large existing vineyards. Joe Davis, wine-grower of Arcadian Winery in the Santa Maria Valley, leases 52 acres of vineyards from five different owners in California. This way, he can take a very active role in the winegrowing process and assure that the grapes are farmed according to his rigid standards.

** The emergence of podcasts. Podcasts are digital media files that are distributed over the internet. Podcasts are also known as blogcasting. In 2005, blogs were all the rage, but in 2006, podcasts became extremely popular with winos. Podcasts offer the opportunity to listen to wine personalities and offer high-quality personal insight into the people behind the wines. Grape Radio is one of the best podcasts. Next up: audio with video internet broadcasts (? vidcasts).

** Proliferation of region-and appellation-specific wine critics. The world of wine is much too big for a single critic to have expertise in every region and/or every varietal. Teams of wine critics now staff major wine publications, with each critic assigned to a specific region. Stephen Tanzer has added a full-time assistant, Josh Reynolds, and relies on several guest contributors. Robert Parker, Jr. has replaced Pierre-Antoine Rovani with David Schildknecht and plans to utilize the talents of several others for the *Wine Advocate* tasting reviews (Antonio Galloni, Italy, Neal Martin, British perspective, Dr. J. Miller, Australia, Spain, Washington State/Oregon, and Mark Squires, Portugal).

** Use of global positioning systems (GPS) to map soils, distribute nutrients and fertilizers, spray for disease, and control watering in vineyards. This is a critical part of precision viticulture now practiced by many winegrowers including The Donum Estate in Carneros and Van Duzer Vineyards in Oregon (both highlighted in the *PinotFile* this past year). Not every winegrower is enthusiastic about the use of this technology out of concern that it can contribute to sameness, that is, very similar wines vintage after vintage, and trumps the artistry involved in a hands-on approaching to farming grapes.

** Increasing interest in biodynamic farming of grapes. Randall Grahm, for example, will farm all Bonny Doon wines biodynamically in the future. Other producers using biodynamic techniques include Domaine Alfred (Edna Valley), Robert Sinskey Vineyards (Carneros), Benziger Family Winery (Sonoma County), Sonoma-Cutrer (Sonoma County), Ceago (Fetzer, Lake County), Brick House Wine Company (Oregon), Francis Tannahill (Oregon), and Cooper Mountain Vineyards (Oregon). Old World proponents include Domaine Romanée-Conti, Domaine Leroy, Domaine d'Auvenay, and Domaine Trapet Pere et Fils. My impression is that many wineries currently employ some biodynamic theories, but are fully committed to the tenants of sustainable farming which form the basis of Austrian scientist Rudolph Steiner's theories. Burying female cow horns filled with cow manure to improve the soil is still a far-out concept to many.

** Use of sheep and chickens in vineyards to battle pests and weeds. If you have traveled in France, you know that the presence of sheep grazing in the vineyards is commonplace. Biodynamic tenants call for the use of animals in farming activities. Sheep control taller weeds and provide manure that gets mixed into compost. In addition, they can sucker vines while causing minimal damage to the soil. Olde English Miniature Babydoll Southdown sheep are becoming popular in many California North Coast vineyards. This Heritage breed is only 24 inches at the shoulder and about 85 pounds. Deborah Walton has a flock of 65 Olde English Babydoll Southdown sheep on her farm in Tomales Bay and leases out the sheep. They are protected by guardian dogs and are confined by the use of an electronic portable fence. Chickens can be moved around the vineyard in portable chicken houses. They also clean out weeds and eat cutworms that feed on vine roots. Fresh eggs every morning is an added benefit.

** Encroachment of commercial enterprise in farmlands. Portland developer David Kahn has sought approval for an upscale 50-room rural hotel including a restaurant and spa in the Willamette Valley adjacent to the vineyards of Domaine Drouhin, north of Dayton. This project has been approved pending The Vintner's Coalition for Economic Progress (led by Jason Lett of Eyrie Vineyards and the Domaine Drouhin Winery) appeal to the Land Use Board of Appeals.

** Alternative closures are becoming more acceptable to restaurants and consumers. Wines with screwcaps, Alcoa's Vino-Seal, and even ones packaged in Tetra Pak cartons are being increasingly served in fine restaurants. Wine producers generally reserve alternative closures for wines that are to be consumed young. According to *Wines & Vines* (November, 2006), screwcap-topped wines had a 51% growth in retail sales in a recent six-month period. Screwcap-topped Pinot Noirs from New Zealand are quite prevalent, and a number of North American producers have now committed to them.

** Mechanical harvesters are now widely used by large growers and even small growers are considering them. All major harvesters now use bow-rod shakers which move the vines in one direction and then suddenly reversing direction. Mature grapes are easily removed, while lighter rotted and shot berries do not release. Leaves and other non-grape material are left behind. At Fresno State, GPS technology is used for what is termed "differential harvesting." Using spectrometry to measure anthocyanin content in the vineyard, the maturation of grapes in different portions of the vineyard are determined and then fed into a GPS unit. The harvester is fitted with a receiver that will control a conveyor system that will in turn segregate fruit according to quality. Mechanical harvesters have limited applicability for Pinot Noir growers because whole-cluster harvesting is not an option. In addition, many Pinot Noir vineyards are planted on tricky hillsides and the types of trellising and row-spacing used are not conducive to mechanical harvesting.

** Night harvesting has become preferable for Pinot Noir producers. Grapes picked at night are fresher, fruitier, and crisper. The development of harvest lights have made this possible. Certainly pickers prefer to harvest grapes in the cool hours of the early morning.

** Two esteemed Burgundian winemakers died this past year: Henri Mayer and Denis Mortet. Mayer's Pinot Noirs were legendary and he was considered a master winemaker. He passed away at the ripe age of 84 from prostate cancer. Mayer was a strong opponent of hard tannins and employed 100% destemming and prefermentation maceration. He was one of the first winemakers in Burgundy to utilize refrigeration and temperature control. Andy Tan of Auric Pacific Fine Wines shared this quote from Mayer: "If it tastes too tannic, then it is too tannic." Andy also pointed out that Mayer thought the biggest bullshit in the viticultural world was biodynamic farming. Clive Coates had first met up with Denis Mortet in 1986 and found a man "forthright, passionate, but open and generous." He noted that Mortet was espousing the idea that "it all starts in the vines" at a time when few expressed this openly. According to Coates, Mortet was a perfectionist and this probably drove him to committing suicide at age 49 early in 2006. Citing his death as a tragedy, Coates points out that he had a history of a nervous breakdown a few years previously, stemming from a feeling that he had not done justice to the opportunities provided by the great 1999 vintage. Coates feels Mortet's 2001s are better than his 1999s and his 2002s are marvelous. Mortet was driven to make wine "like Charles Rousseau." I have had a number of flings with Mortet's wines and although his mid 1990s' wines were a little heavy-handed with generous oak, they stimulated me to delve more deeply into Burgundy.

The Top Catchy Pinot Words of 2006

Brand sluts: consumers who jump from one wine brand to another with no loyalty

Label kisser: devotee of a particular wine label regardless of the quality of the wine inside

Pinotporn: the winegrowing and winemaking process as a voyeuristic pleasure

Cool-climate: magical catchword for Pinot Noir vineyard sites

Valley of the Duttons: The area west of Graton in Sonoma County. The Duttons control 80 different ranches totaling more than 1000 acres

Vitamin P: Pinot Noir

ESPN: IMing for Easy Sipping Pinot Noir

T 'n a: shorthand for tannins and acid in a Pinot (also a Burlesque term)

Elvis on velvet: Description of the soft texture of Pinot Noir

Caliesque: Refers to the ripe, big style of Pinot Noir for which California is famous for

Pinot fabulousity: Description of that something that great Pinot Noir has

Hulk-ization: The pumping up of Pinot Noir - Pinot Noir on steroids

Cult noir: Pinot lovers

See also Volume 6, Issue 1 of the *PinotFile* which lists the current Pinocabulary: Pinotosity, Pinotology, Pinotholicism, Pinotspreak, Pinoformation, Pinoterroirist, Pinot Pimp, Pinot Greek, Pinotphile, Pinot Queen, Pinoaficionado, and Pinoteer

Wine is Good News for Health in 2006

There were a large number of research studies reported in 2006 that continue to substantiate the health benefits of wine. The modern wine industry cannot tout these findings to the public because of events that transpired back in 1991. That was the year that Morley Safer ran a televised feature on '60 Minutes' about the French paradox. According to AC Nielsen, red wine sales were moribund at the time (17% of the market), but by 2005 had grown to 42%. Winemakers like Robert Mondavi and others wanted to promote the health benefits of wine following this 1991 telecast, but the B.A.T.F. blocked all attempts to do so. It was unlawful to make any health claims for wine on wine labels. The Wine Institute stayed in step with the B.A.T.F. and advised against advertising wine as a healthy beverage. To this day, the Wine Institute still discourages member wineries from promoting the health benefits of wine. In addition, the U.S. Public Health 2005 Dietary Guidelines contain no wording that refers to drinking with meals. UK-based Alcohol in Moderation (AIM) and The Desert Heart Foundation and its associated Reynaud Society are among the few voices that are bringing the message of truth about wine and health to the public.

Most of the health benefits of wine have been attributed to alcohol and a polyphenolic compound found in the skin of red grapes called resveratrol. Many studies have shown that polyphenols protect against cardiovascular disease and have possibly multiple other far-reaching health enhancing effects. The mechanisms of alcohol/resveratrol cardioprotection are complex and beyond this discussion, but suffice it say that the protection stems from the following major actions working in combination with a number of as yet unexplained mechanisms: antioxidant effects, increase in HDL cholesterol, reduction of platelet function, and protection of blood vessel endothelial function.

Among all alcoholic drinks, red wine is the most beneficial. According to *Science of Wine* (written by Jamie Goode), a typical glass of red wine contains 200mg of phenolic compounds, while a white wine contains about 40mg. Wine contains more polyphenols than grape juice or grape extract because alcohol during the fermentation process helps extract these compounds from the skins. Red wines differ in the amount of resveratrol they contain, with cool-climate Pinot Noir being one of the highest. A recent study by Bodega Catena Zapata in Argentina has shown that its wines have more resveratrol than red wines from France, Spain, Italy, Chile, and Australia. One of the confounding issues with resveratrol is that its beneficial effects shown in a number of animal studies require a dose far in excess of that recommended for healthy consumption of wine (2-3 glasses a day for men, 1-2 glasses a day for women).

Some recent research reported in *Nature* (November 29, 2006) disputes the claim that resveratrol is the key to heart health from wine. Researchers Roger Corder of Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Dentistry in London and Alan Crozier of the University of Glasgow tested the endothelial lining of human artery walls with various compounds to see which had the greatest effect. The tests indicated that flavonoids called oligomeric procyanidins (condensed tannins that cause bitterness in red wines) repressed the production of the peptide that causes hardening of the arteries. The authors pointed out that resveratrol was "available at one one-hundredth or one one-thousandth of the levels of procyanidin. The two researchers went on to look at regions that produced unusually long-lived men and the wine drunk in those areas. The Nuoro province of Sardinia and the Gers region of southwest France have a large population of men who live past the age of 75. The local wines of these two regions have as much as four times the amount of procyanidins than other wines. The large amounts of procyanidins was attributed to the extremely long hang times and fermentations (up to four weeks) employed, the type of grapes involved, and the higher-elevations where the grapes were grown. The exact effects of procyanidins have not been investigated in humans as yet.

There are a number of scientific investigators who are not convinced that wine is the health panacea. They point out that moderate wine drinkers tend to lead a healthier lifestyle, and are richer and better educated. In other words, moderate drinking is more a sign of good health, but may not be the cause. Kaye M. Fillmore of the UC San Francisco School of Nursing and a group of colleagues published findings in *Addiction Research and Theory* this year that adds to the debate about the health benefits of wine. They reviewed 54 published reports on the health effects of drinking and discovered that the majority of the papers had significant numbers of people who had recently quit drinking (due to age, illness or the use of the drugs that contraindicated the drinking of alcohol) among the group who abstained from alcohol. Only 7 of the studies included long-term abstainers and these studies showed no benefit from moderate drinking.

One thing does seem certain about drinking: the pattern of drinking can significantly impact the health of the liver. A study from the State University of New York at Buffalo found that not only the amount you drink, but the pattern of drinking and when you drink determines the amount of damaging effect on the liver. The study found differences among the sexes. Women who drank alone and without a meal were more likely to suffer liver damage than women who drank with a friend while sharing a meal. With men, the amount and frequency of drinking were more important than the pattern of drinking, both with and without a meal. A safe level for men was 14-27 drinks (14g of alcohol per drink) and for women 7-14 drinks. Another study from New York found that people who drank alcohol without food had a significantly higher risk of high blood pressure compared to a group of people who drank primarily with food. Research on Italian drinkers compared to non-drinkers reported that the risk of heart attack was reduced in those who consumed alcohol during meals only.

A number of recent studies have shown that alcohol is an important component of the Mediterranean diet. This diet has been shown to increase life expectancy among elderly Europeans. The Mediterranean diet consists of 9 components: vegetables, legumes, fruits, cereals, fish, low amounts of dairy products and meat, high intake of unsaturated fats such as olive oil, low intake of saturated fats, and the moderate intake of alcohol primarily as wine. When the Mediterranean diet is combined with non-smoking, regular physical activity, and moderate alcohol use, there is a reduced risk of mortality from heart disease and cancer.

Following is a summary of studies reported over the last year in support of the health benefits of wine.

Life Span Italian researchers reported in December that moderate drinking (2-4 drinks a day for men and 1-2 drinks a day for women) may lengthen life. They gathered data from 34 observational studies conducted world-wide and looked at more than 1 million people in total who reported their drinking habits. The studies lasted from 6 to 26 years. Moderate drinkers were 18% less likely to die of any cause than light and non-drinkers. Heavy drinkers were more likely to die of any cause. Another study, which was widely reported in U.S. newspapers on November 2, showed that resveratrol extended the lives of fat mice. Research done by the Harvard Medical School and the National Institute on Aging found that high doses of resveratrol may offset the negative effects of a high-calorie diet in mice and significantly extend their life spans. The catch here is that a consumer trying to drink enough wine to get the same dosage of resveratrol as the mice would inevitably develop liver problems. An 150-lb person would need to drink a 55-gallon drum of wine to get the same amount as was given to the mice! This study has spurred red wine sales but the researchers were careful to point out that their research did not support red wine consumption. A study published last February in *Current Biology*, found that resveratrol lengthened the life span of normally short-lived fish, and also slowed memory and muscle problems associated with aging.

Cancer Researchers, led by oncologist Joseph Anderson, M.D., reported in the September issue of the *American Journal of Gastroenterology* that wine drinkers are 50% less likely to develop colorectal cancer compared to nondrinkers. Drinkers of beer and spirits did not enjoy the same benefit. The resulting anti-cancer benefit of wine is only speculation, however, as wine drinkers tend to enjoy a

better lifestyle, do not smoke, exercise, and are less likely to be obese. There has been a reported link of breast cancer with alcohol consumption in women, but this has never been proven. Australian research reported in the *British Medical Journal* this year showed that a diet rich in folic acid found in leafy greens, citrus fruits and beans may eliminate any added risk of breast cancer caused by moderate alcohol consumption. Because a metabolite of alcohol in the stomach may destroy folic acid before it is digested, women drinkers are advised to increase their folate intake.

Stroke A Columbia University study found that drinking two 4 ounce glasses of wine a day reduced the risk of ischemic stroke by about 50%. This 13-year study was reported in the January issue of *Stroke*. The effect was beneficial to both men and women and participants of all races. Those who drank more than two glasses of wine a day had a risk level close to those of non-drinkers. This was one of the first studies on wine to include Blacks and Hispanics.

Brain In the November 11 issue of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, researchers at the Litwin-Zucker Research Center for the Study of Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders in New York found that resveratrol assisted human cells in breaking down the molecules (amyloid-beta peptides) which forms lesions in the brains of Alzheimer's patients. This anti-amyloidogenic effect was observed in cell culture and may require concentrations of resveratrol that are not obtainable by diet and moderate alcohol consumption. What is exciting is that the researchers have found analogues of resveratrol that are 20 times more potent than the original natural compound. The author of the study notes that a glass of red wine may ease the fear of losing memory and even make for some nice ones! Another study conducted on a mouse model by scientists at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, showed that a moderate amount of red wine consumption in the form of Cabernet Sauvignon helps reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease. The mice who drank Cabernet Sauvignon had 50% fewer amyloid-beta plaques than the mice that drank water. The group of mice given ethanol alone showed a 25% reduction in plaques compared to controls. Two other studies (published in *Stroke* and *Neuroepidemiology*) this year showed that moderate drinkers performed better on cognitive tests than non-drinkers, light drinkers, or heavy drinkers. The results were most evident in women. Finally, research published in the *Annals of Neurology* discovered that participants who kept strictly to a Mediterranean diet were 40% less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. The New Yorkers studied even showed some benefit from partial adherence to the diet.

Ears A British report published in *New Scientist* found that wine, in association with aspirin and green vegetables, may delay the onset of age-related deafness and reduce hearing loss from other causes. The mechanism of this effect is thought to be due to antioxidants acting on hair cells within the inner ear.

Eyes Resveratrol has been shown to reduce the incidence of senile cataracts by up to 50% and may also aid in slowing senile macular degeneration.

Teeth Both good news and bad news here. First the good news. Scientists from Universite Laval in Quebec, Canada, reported that polyphenols can help in preventing and treating inflammatory periodontal disease. Red wine polyphenols modulate several inflammatory processes in response to bacterial stimuli by scavenging and inhibiting free-radical generation by host immune cells. The study was performed on mouse immune cells infected by bacteria that cause periodontal disease and exposing them to resveratrol. Research from Robert Richie of the University of California, Berkeley, found that alcohol fortifies the dentin in teeth by removing water, thereby strengthening teeth. This may not prove to have any practical value as the alcohol must remain in the mouth all of the time or the effect disappears. Now the bad news. The acids and alcohol in red wine can cause tooth erosion. As reported in the October issue of the *British Columbia Medical Journal*, frequent tasting of wine may potentially lead to dental erosions. The pH of wine ranges from 3.2 to 3.8 and demineralization of enamel starts at a pH of less than 5.7. Only two documented case reports of tooth erosions exist. Rinsing with water and eating foods helps neutralize acidity, but may have no practical effect. The risk of staining teeth with red wine is well-proven and probably more significant than the risk of erosion.

General Health Tests by researchers at Madrid's Council for Scientific Investigations show that red wine has between three and eight times more fiber than white wine. Researchers analyzed data from more than 8,000 respondents in a major survey and found one alcoholic drink a day reduced the risk of obesity by 46% and two drinks a day cut the risk by 50%. Heavy drinkers were more likely to be obese. Another study, reported in the *International Journal of Obesity* by Danish researchers, confirmed these results and found that regular, moderate drinkers are less likely to be obese. Italian researchers found that melatonin in a number of grape varieties may aid sleep. However, the effect of alcohol may counteract this effect. The risk of type 2 diabetes (adult-onset) may be reduced by drinking moderately. The report was published in *Diabetes Care*. 15 health studies on individuals who developed type 2 diabetes between 1966 and 2004 world-wide were reviewed. There was a significant lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes among men and women who were light to moderate drinkers. Other studies have shown that moderate consumption of wine or beer may benefit women with type 2 diabetes by increasing insulin resistance.

Best Quotes of 2006

"It's nontraditional now, but in 30 years, this will be the traditional style of Pinot Noir."Michael Browne, winemaker, Kosta Browne Winery

"The riper styles: I've made them and I've gotten high scores from them. But they weren't my best Pinots by any means."Bob Cabral, winemaker, Williams Selyems Winery

"For all sorts of reasons, success could spoil Pinot Noir. It could drive up prices for wines already in short supply. It could encourage people to make nominal Pinots that taste like generic red wine."John Winthrop Haeger, author, *North American Pinot Noir*

"Jim Clendenen has been making wine for over 20 years in a style I love, and he doesn't really care what the critics say. He's a pioneer not only in creating great, balanced Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, but making people understand that wine is supposed to be drunk with food. There are very few New World producers doing this."Rajat Parr, wine director, Mina Group

"Too much fine wine is sacrificed on the alter of competition - great bottles tasted "against" each other to see which producer comes out on top."Jasper Marris MW

"Let's be honest: there's only one activity more satisfying than drinking good wine with good food; and if you're drinking wine in the right company, the one pleasure, more often than not, will lead to the other."Jay McInerney, author, *A Hedonist in the Cellar*

"Good Pinot Noir has a delicate elegance and a luscious succulence that can transport you to another place. The charms of Pinot Noir are subtle and require patience. Pinot Noir rewards those with astute palates and experience. Great aged Pinot Noir provides the most ethereal wine drinking pleasure known to this detective."Jake Lorenzo, writer, *Wine Business Monthly*

"Pinot Noir is like your best lady. You have to treat her nice."Anthony Austin, winemaker, Sonoma Coast Vineyards

"The 'bigger is better' mentality is sweeping the world. Some of them are problematic. They are losing the elegance and finesse that drew me to the grape (Pinot Noir) in the first place."Peter Palmer, wine director, Farallon Restaurant

"You see an awful lot of smart guys with bad Pinot, but you rarely see a good Pinot with a dumb guy."Prince of Pinot

"It's not the Pinot in your life, but the life in your Pinot that really counts." Prince of Pinot

Notable American Pinot Noir Producers

It seems like not a day goes by that I don't discover a new producer of Pinot Noir. In John Winthrop Haeger's 2004 book, *North American Pinot Noir*, he states that "a fair estimate is that somewhere between 400 and 450 wineries make Pinot Noir" in North America. However, he recently noted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that he now has 720 producers in his database. I am compiling my own list and believe the number may now exceed that. Beginning last year, I divided the major producers into four categories: Cult Pinot Noirs, Emerging Star Pinot Noirs, Just Hatched Pinot Noirs, and Reliable and Reputable Pinot Noirs. The wineries included are ones I have drunk and recommend. The list is by no means complete and I am sure I have left out a favorite of yours. California and Oregon are grouped together.

Cult Pinot Noirs

A cult Pinot Noir is one that is furiously sought after by pinoaficionados. They are produced in very small quantities and sold mainly through a mailing list, which in many cases is full and has, itself, a waiting list. In a number of cases, the wine is priced significantly above comparable wines from the same appellation and demands a premium on the secondary market. Cult Pinot Noirs are often purchased and then sold on the secondary market at a significant markup to pay for the few bottles that are kept to drink. The cult wine movement was born in California with the Cabernet Sauvignons of Napa Valley such as Grace Family, Screaming Eagle and Harlan Estate.

Ambullneo, Aubert, Brewer-Clifton, Brogan Cellars, Dehlinger, DuMol, George, J. Rochioli, Kalin Cellars, Kistler, Kosta Browne, Littorai, MacPhail, Marcassin, Peter Michael, Pisoni Vineyards & Winery, Radio-Coteau, Rivers-Marie, Sea Smoke, Shea Wine Cellars, Sine Qua Non, W.H. Smith Wines, Williams Selyem

Emerging Star Pinot Noirs

Emerging producers of Pinot Noir are those of recent origin who have garnered many accolades and created significant interest among pinotphiles. Some are long-standing names that have become transformed through ownership or winemaker change into stellar producers, others are a product of the latest boom in Pinot Noir startup wineries.

Alcina Cellars, Alesia and Rhys, Alma Rosa, Ambiouness, Artesa, Aubin Verve, August West, Ayoub, B. Kosuge Wines, Badge, Balleto, Beauregard Vineyards, Belle Glos, Belle Vallee, Bonaccorsi, Buena Vista, Casa Barranca, Chasseur, Cima Collina, Clos Pepe Estate, Clos Saron, Consilience, Copain, Copeland Creek Vineyards, D'Argenzio Winery, Dain, De La Montanya, DePonte Cellars, Derbes Wines, Et fille, Freeman Vineyards & Winery, Green Truck Cellars, Gundlach-Bundschu, Gypsy Dancer Estates, Halleck, Hope & Grace, Inman Family, Hamel, J. Lynn, J. Wilkes, Ken Brown Wines, Kenneth-Crawford, Lachini, Lazy River, Le Cadeau, Londer, Loring Wine Company, Lucia, Maysara, Miura, Native9, Orogeny, Peay Vineyards, Pey-Marin, Privé, R. Stuart & Co, Red Car, Roar Wines, Robert Stemmler, Row Eleven, Rusack Vineyards, Silver Mountain Vineyards, Sinor-LaVallee, Skewis, Sonnett, Sonoma Coast Vineyards, Soter Vineyards, Stevenson-Barrie, Stoller Vineyards, Summerland Winery, The Donum Estate, Twomey Cellars, Varner, Van Duzer Vineyards, Vision Cellars, White Rose, Windy Oaks, Woodenhead.

Just Hatched Pinot Noirs

Ampelos Cellars, Anthill Farms Winery, Auteur, Benovia, Bianchi, Black Cap, Cardwell Hill Cellars, Carneros Della Notte, Carr, Churchill Cellars, Cherry Hill, Clary Ranch, Corda, Cubanismo, Elliott Family Cellars, Eno Wines, Eric Kent, Gypsy Canyon, Harrington, Jack Greek Cellars, John Tyler, Kanzler Vineyards, Kastania, Kendric, Kenneth Volk, Ketcham Estate, Kutch Wines, L'Angevin, Longfellow, Lookout Ridge, Mahoney Vineyards, Miller Wine Works, Molnar Family, Nicholson Ranch, Pali, Paradise Vineyard, Paul Lato Wines, Peka, Pelerin Wines, Philo Ridge, Ribbon Ridge, Ridgeway, Sanctuary, Sojourn, Stephen's Cellars, Stubbs Vineyard, The Four Graces, Toulouse, Twin Oaks Cellars, Vergari, Vino V, Winter's Hill.

Reliable and Reputable Pinot Noirs

These are consistently reliable premium producers of Pinot Noir that have a track record of crafting fine wines.

Acacia, Adelsheim, Adobe Road, Ancien, Anne Amie, Arcadian, Andrew Rich Wines, A.P. Vin, Argyle, Archery Summit, Au bon Climat, Babcock, Beaux Freres, Belle Pente, Belle Vallee, Benton-Lane, Bernardus, Bethel Heights, Bergstrom, Bouchaine, Broadley, Brickhouse, Burrell School, Byron, Calera, Cambria, Cameron, Capieux, Carpe Diem, Casa Cassara, Castalia, Chalone, Chehalem, CL Wines, Claudia Springs, Clos La Chance, Clos Saron, Clos Tita, Coleman, Costa de Oro, Cuvaision Estate, Cristom, Davis Bynum, Davis Family Vineyards, David Bruce, DeLoach, Domaine Alfred, Domaine Drouhin, Domaine Serene, DuMol, Dutton-Goldfield, Elk Cove, Elke Vineyards, Erath, Eyrie Vineyard, Failla-Jordan, Fess Parker, Fiddlehead Cellars, Foley Estate, Forchini, Fort Ross, Goldeneye, El Molino, Erath, Etude, Evesham Wood, EIEIO, Eyrie, Flowers, Flying Goat Cellars, Foxen, Gary Farrell, Hamacher, Handley Cellars, Hagafen, Hanzell, Hartford Family, Hirsch Estate, Hitching Post, Hordredge, Hug Cellars, Husch, Iron Horse, Joseph Swan, J Wine Co, Kellar Estate, Kenwood, Ken Wright Cellars, La Crema, Laetitia, Landmark Vineyards, Lane Tanner, Lemelson, Lincourt, Longoria, Lost Canyon, Lucas & Lewellen, Lucia, Lynmar, MacMurray Ranch, MacRostie, Marimar Estate, Martinelli, Mayacamas, Melville, Merry Edwards, Miner Family, Morgan, Moshin, Mt Eden, Mystic, Navarro, Ojai Vineyards, Olivet Lane Estate, Ortman Family, Papapietro Perry, Paradise Ridge, Patricia Green Cellars, Patz & Hall, Paul Hobbs, Penner-Ash, Ponzi, Porter Creek, Red Car, Rex Hill, Roar, Robert Mueller Cellars, Robert Sinskey, Rochioli, Roessler Cellars, Russian Hill, Rutz Cellars, Saintsbury, Salamandre, Sanford, Scherrer, Schug, Scott Paul Wines, Sebastopol Vineyards- Dutton Estate, Siduri, Sineann, Soquel Vineyards, Sonoma-Cutrer, St. Innocent, Stephen Ross Cellars, Talbott, Talisman, Talley Vineyards, Tantara, Testarossa, Tolosa, Torii Mor, Truchard, Vision Cellars, Walter Hansel, WesMar, Whitcraft, Whitethorn, Wild Hog, Wild Horse, Witness Tree, Willakenzie Estate, ZD.

