

**Pinot Noir:
When its
Great, its
Totally Sensual**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*Pinot Noir: Once
it has its hooks
in you, there is
no tearing
away.*

WOPN: 7th Heaven for Pinot Geeks

“A marvelous searching wine, and it perfumes the blood ere one can say,
‘What’s this?’

Tasting note, William Shakespeare

It is a special time to be a Pinot Noir lover. Since the first World of Pinot Noir held in 2001, there have been remarkable advances in the growing and crafting of ultra-premium Pinot Noir in North America. Years ago at this event, one could divide the offerings pretty much into good and bad. Pinot Noir was still causing a lot of heartbreak. At this year’s 7th Annual World of Pinot Noir, held this past weekend (March 2-3) at The Cliffs Resort in Shell Beach, California, it was more like good, better, and wowee! Good Pinot Noir is true to the varietal but not much more: “whitebread” Pinot as it were. Better Pinot Noir tastes like Pinot Noir, but also shows a sense of place (terroir). And Wowee! Pinot Noir not only tastes like Pinot Noir and shows a regional character, it has a sensuality that is easy to recognize but always a challenge to describe.

It is the pursuit of this sensuality that led several hundred Pinot Geeks on a pilgrimage to the Chapel of Pinot Noir on the Central Coast. Besides outstanding seminars, meals, and camaraderie, there was the opportunity to taste the Pinot Noirs of almost 160 producers in walk-around tastings on Friday and Saturday afternoons. Winemakers were in abundance and eager to speak Pinot (see photos, page 2). This event is really a joyous and convivial festival and the large and enthusiastic throng prevents any serious geeky tasting. It is best to gather one’s self at the end of the day, recline in a comfortable chair overlooking the ocean, and while staring at your purple-stained finger tips and your disgustingly dirty wine stem, pull back and leisurely savor some of the dreamy wines from the recesses of your recent memory.

One of the unsolved challenges of walk-around tastings in managing all of the paraphernalia. Two hands is not enough to wrestle with a wine stem, a spit cup, a program directory of producers, a pen, a plate of hors d’oeuvres, water, sunglasses and a camera. Forget shaking hands. Regardless of what you wear, there are never enough pockets. One rule always holds true, however, make sure your outerwear is darkly colored.



Kathy Joseph and husband Tom Doyle, Fiddlehead

***“That Prince knows more
about Pinot than God”
Overheard at the
World of Pinot Noir***

Paul Lato and friend, Paul Lato Wines



Jonathan Pey, Pey-Marin Vineyards

I spent some of my time interviewing winemakers for Grape Radio. These chats with Paul Austin (Native 9 and Alta Maria), Scott Rich (Talisman Cellars), Kiwi Dean Shaw (Nevis Bluff), and Annette Hoff (Cima Collina) will be featured in a future podcast on graperadio.com. Many other winemakers and wine personalities were interviewed by the Grape Radio crew as part of their coverage of this event. Eric Anderson is pictured with winemaker Mike Sinor of Sinor-LaValle).



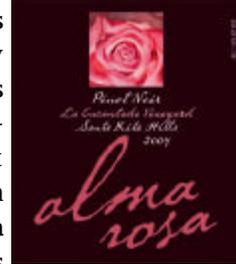
It was impossible to visit and taste with all of the producers at the event. I did come away with a few general impressions of interest.

1. Woman winemakers have a nice touch with Pinot Noir. They seem to have great success in capturing the delicate texture and elegant nuances of the grape. As David Autrey (Westrey Wines in Oregon) has said, "Women show a sense of balance in winemaking that you don't see with men." There were several examples here including Cima Collina (Annette Hoff), Fiddlehead (Kathy Joseph), and Lane Tanner Wines (Lane Tanner).
2. There is considerable interest in alternative closures. Dean Shaw, a Kiwi winemaker, said that New Zealand wineries were fed up with bad corks and he, personally, has gone to the screwcap closure for Pinot Noir. Peter Rosback of Sineann (Oregon) has changed over to glass stoppers for his wines. The advantages are several: they produce a very secure and tight closure, they can be reinserted after opening, they are very resistant to breakage, and they are recyclable. He feels the screwcap closure is fragile and prone to breakage with loss of complete seal if handled roughly. He is using a German glass stopper with a traditional foil cap. Josh Jensen of Calera was displaying glass closures at his table.
3. Many winemakers are wrestling with style. In a perfect world, most would opt for a classic, elegant style of Pinot Noir with nicely balanced composition of good acid and moderate alcohol. However, the Cab-centric consumers and many wine critics prefer a bolder, fruit-forward style readily drinkable upon release.
4. Unfortunately, Pinot to envy is fast becoming a rich man's sport. Because of the increased costs of farming Pinot Noir, as well as its limited plantings, the price of Pinot Noir from top vineyards has risen. All of the costs in making fine Pinot Noir have escalated. Higher prices breed higher prices, because no producer wants to under price his wine. This can give the consumer the impression that the wine is not up to the standards of the more expensive bottles. Could triple figures be far behind?

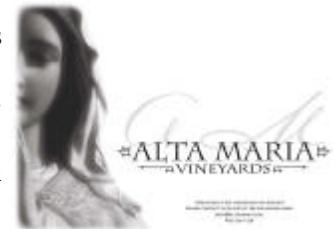
There were many flat-out great Pinots at this event and there were considerably more that I never had the opportunity to sample. The quality was very high every where I sipped and spat. It was saddening to see so much great Pinot Noir dumped from spit cups at this event. The 2005 vintage in the Central Coast of California is a stunner and maybe the best ever! Here are some producers with 'wowee!' wines and many others that were perfectly fine.

WOWEE! PINOTS

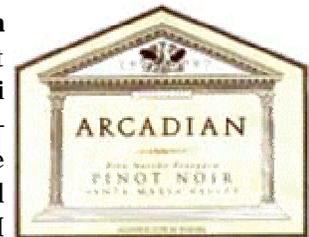
Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards It always is nice to see Richard Sanford pouring his wines at these events. Despite many years in the Santa Barbara County wine scene, and one of the first to plant Pinot Noir (Sanford & Benedict Vineyard in 1971) in the Ste. Rita Hills appellation, he is still enthusiastic, and speaks patiently with all who come by to say hello. A couple of years ago he left his namesake winery, Sanford, and began his own label, Alma Rosa with wife Thekla. He retained over 100 acres of certified organic estate vineyards including the La Encantada Vineyard. The winemaker at Alma Rosa is Christian Roguenant. The Alma Rosa temporary tasting room in Buellton is open from 11:00 to 4:00 daily. **2005 Alma Rosa La Encantada Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 1500 cases, \$49 (screwcap). Like the 2004 version of this wine, it is plush with red and dark fruits, but nicely restrained and balanced. One of the great wines among many leading the charge in the Santa Rita Hills.



Alta Maria Winery & Vineyards College buddies Paul Wilkins and James Ontiveros are partners in Native9 as well as this new label created in 2005. Their debut release was poured at WOPN. Paul has considerable experience in Rhone varietals, having apprenticed with John Alban (Alban Cellars) for several years, and also makes a Grenache from the Uriel J. Nielson Vineyard. James is a master winegrower who has a knack with Pinot Noir. He and Paul are planning to find small, hidden vineyard sites in the Santa Maria Valley that can offer wines of great distinction. The phone is 805-934-5206. **2005 Alta Maria Bien Nacido Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** Just fine in every way and will gain in stature with a little aging. Seductive fruit with fine sweet tannins and excellent length.

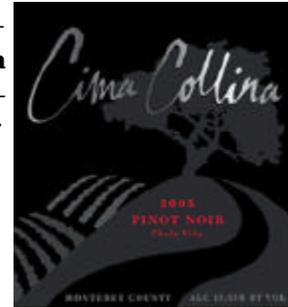


Arcadian Winery Joe Davis is a cerebral winemaker whose goal is to create wines for long aging. He is an advocate of the Burgundian model, and inexperienced tasters may find the wines a bit austere upon release. But those with patience will be rewarded. Joe was pouring his 1997 Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir (the oldest wine I saw poured at the event) and this was one fine mature Pinot. Joe sources his grapes from several notable vineyards in the Santa Rita Hills, Santa Maria Valley, and Santa Lucia Highlands. His wines (including some older vintages) are available on the website at www.arcadianwinery.com. **2003 Arcadian Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** (\$80). From the most coveted block of the famed Pisoni Vineyard. Many people say Joe's Pisoni Pinot Noir is the most "unpisoni" of the many that are produced from this vineyard. It really amounts to an interpretation of the site and Joe prefers a more modest, medium-bodied, and understated style that offers plenty of restrained power beautifully matched with a silky texture and bright acidity at the end. I also sampled the **2003 Arcadian Dierberg Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$50) and the **2003 Rio Vista Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$65) and both were hitting on all cylinders.

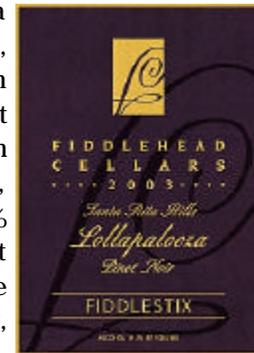


Cima Collina A small-lot garage-styled producer with a talented winemaker, Annette Hoff. The winery sources grapes from family-owned vineyards in the Monterey region, as well as the winery's own vineyard at Hilltop Ranch in Carmel Valley. Cima Collina is Italian for hill top. The website is www.cimacollin.com or phone 831-384-7806. Look for the interview with Annette on an upcoming

Grape Radio podcast. The blog on the Cima Collina website is extremely informative and a recent award winner among wine blogs. **2005 Cima Collina Chula Vista Vineyard Monterey County Pinot Noir** \$28. This is the debut release of this single vineyard Pinot Noir. A really beautiful wine with gossamer tannins, roses, and spice and everything nice. It wraps you in silk pajamas.



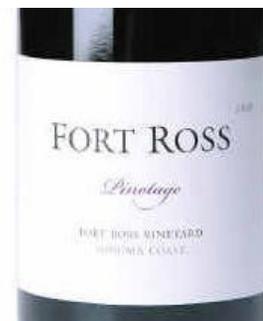
Fiddlehead Cellars I don't know of another winemaker in the business who has more energy and passion than owner Kathy Joseph. Her Fiddlestix Vineyard is now one of the most desirable sources for Pinot Noir in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. She was pouring a mini vertical of her Lollapalooza (try saying that after a few glasses of Pinot), which is composed of the best barrels in her cellar. Lollapalooza is an old English term meaning "best of its kind." The Fiddlechix lineup of wines are available at www.fiddleheadcellars.com. But I suggest you take a trip to Lompoc and catch Kathy in her native environment for a real Pinot experience (1597 E. Chestnut, 805-742-0204). **2003 Fiddlehead Lollapalooza Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 312 cases, \$50. The 2002 was as smooth as a baby's bottom, the 2003 is just starting to round out beautifully, and the 2004 is a youngster that drinks like mother's milk. I told Kathy I preferred the 2003 and she replied, "Good thing, that's the one that is currently for sale!"



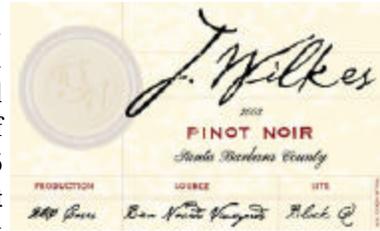
Flying Goat Cellars Owner and winemaker Norm Yost is a veteran winemaker in Santa Barbara County whose label specializes in limited quantities of vineyard designated Pinot Noirs from the Central Coast. He crafts his beautiful Pinot Noirs in a small winery in the Lompoc ghetto. The phone is 805-688-1814 and the website www.flyinggoatcellars.com. The **2005 Flying Goat Cellars Rancho Santa Rosa Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$44) won the Red Wine SwqEEPstakes Award at the 2007 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (now sold out not surprisingly). The **2005 Flying Goat Cellars Dierberg Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** (\$42) is every bit as good and still available. The Dierberg is aromatically stylish with a palate which is soft, plush, long and tasty. Flat out beautiful. Oh, the Dierberg won a Gold Medal at the same competition.



Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery This small artisan producer of fine Pinot Noir is located at the historic Russian settlement of Fort Ross a few miles from the Pacific Ocean on the extreme or true Sonoma Coast. Noted winemaker Ed Kurtzman (Freeman and August West) crafts some very stylish Pinot Noirs here. **2003 Fort Ross Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$37). The estate vineyard has a nice mix of Calera, Swan and Pommard selections along with Dijon clones 115 and 777. This Pinot is a love letter from the Coast with its charming perfume, ethereal style, powdery tannins, and refined acidity on the backend. The **2003 Fort Ross Symposium Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$28) is an easier drinking version of the estate Pinot Noir with some Pinotage added. The owners honor their South African heritage by planting and producing a Pinotage (a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsaut) as well and I am told it is one of the best examples produced in the world! I applaud the winery for encouraging the diversity of wine in all of its expressions. As a side note, there is actually a fan club for Pinotage (www.pinotage.blogspot.com). The wines are available on the website at www.fortrossvineyard.com.



J. Wilkes Jeff Wilkes worked for many years at Bien Nacido Vineyard in a number of capacities. He began his first foray in winemaking with the start of the J. Wilkes label in 2001. He uses grapes from selected blocks of the Bien Nacido Vineyard and Solomon Hills Vineyard. Jeff also produces a very credible Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir's pale twin. **2005 J. Wilkes Bien Nacido Vineyard Q Block Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 172 cases, \$60. I have thoroughly enjoyed Jeff's Pinot Noirs since the first releases, but I must admit that this may be his best to date. Jeff focuses refined aromatics, soft textures, and overall elegance and this wine hits the mark on all three. The nose is complex with fruit, violets, smoke and spice leading to dusty red cherry spiced fruit and touched off by refined acidity on the lengthy finish. This is the stuff Pinot dreams are made of. Magnums are available for the first time as well. The 2004 vintage of the same wine needed more bottle age and will be released along with the 2005 within the next several months. Call Jeff at 805-899-2845.

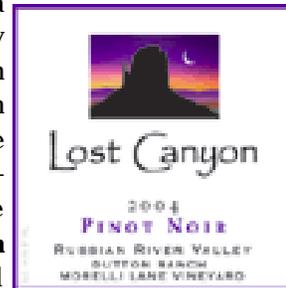


Lane Tanner Winery Lane Tanner has a lot of flare and a great sense of humor. She is a one-woman winery. Since she was mentored by the late, great Andre Tchelistcheff, she has taken the title of Pinot Czarina in his honor. She has a style and sticks to it: picks her fruit often earlier than others, looking for exciting tastes and not overripe flavors; uses oak judiciously so you never think oak when you taste her wines, and seeks a substantial acid backbone that portends a long life and a good time at the table. Her wines are available at www.lanetanner.com and are very well priced. **2005 Lane Tanner Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., 264 cases, \$30.



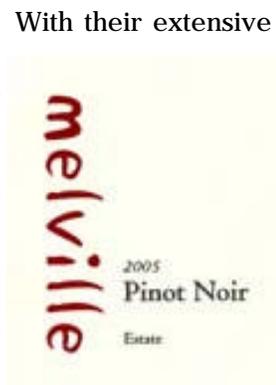
The back label says "When are we going to live, if not now?" She has that right. This wine has a very nice perfume of ripe cherry, cassis and toast. There is plenty of backend power and a great sweet cherry kiss at the end that lasts and lasts. The whole package is nicely composed and balanced. What a novel idea - a California Pinot Noir with 13% alcohol - you can drink a couple of glasses without getting sideways. Not for Cabophiles or lovers of FrankenPinots. See feature story in a future edition of the *PinotFile* on the full lineup of Lane Tanner Pinot Noirs.

Lost Canyon Winery This is a winery of true gargariste origins, beginning in a garage in Montclair Hills of California 25 years ago. Today, the urban winery resides in a turn of the century building near the childhood home of Jack London on the Oakland waterfront. Three Pinot Noirs are produced from vineyards in Los Carneros and Russian River Valley. I have been a fan of the wines since their first release in 2001. The 2005 lineup has a more elegant slant. A full report on the wines will be forthcoming in another issue. The wines are available at www.lostcanyonwinery.com. **2005 Dutton Ranch Morelli Lane Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$40) A luscious offering with plenty of richness and creaminess. Mushroom, tea and cherry aromas followed by spicy Pinot fabulosity.

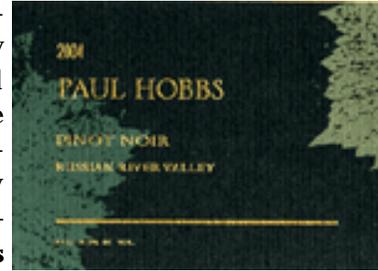


The right stuff.

Melville Melville is a very innovative estate winery in the Santa Rita Hills. With their extensive clonal diversity, and careful vineyard management, they produce wines of great distinction. They produce an interesting series of clonal specific Pinot Noirs including Dijon 113, 667, and Pommard 5. Their estate small lot collection for 2005 includes High Density (172 cases, \$46), Clone 115 Indigene (171 cases, \$46), Terraces (818 cases, \$52), and Carrie's (816 cases, \$52). Each wine is vinified very similarly, but is distinctive based on its origin from different sections of the estate vineyard. The wines are available from the winery at 805-735-7030. **2005 Melville Terraces** and **2005 Melville Carrie's**. Both of these offerings are off the charts. There is a striking complexity to both in aromatics and flavors. The Terraces may be more red fruit inspired and the Carrie's more dark fruit driven, but both are refined and stylish. Classy wax seals also.



Paul Hobbs Winery Paul Hobbs has a colorful winemaking background. He rose to notoriety at Simi in the mid 1980s, subsequently made wine in Argentina, consulted for Peter Michael, Fisher, Lewis and Chalone, and most recently has a winemaking project in Hungary. He started his namesake label in 1991. In 1998 he planted his estate vineyard, Lindsay Vineyard, located near Graton in the Russian River Valley and named it in honor of his father. In 2003 he built a winery overlooking this vineyard. At the WOPN he debuted his **2005 Paul Hobbs Lindsay Estate Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** and was pouring the **2005 Paul Hobbs Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** as well. These are both substantial Pinot Noirs with alcohols in the 14.7-14.8% range. They are plush wines with a striking mid palate richness and a gorgeous peacock tail of spices, notably cinnamon, on a never ending finish. The Lindsay Vineyard is more backward with more structure and tannin at this stage. Hobbs is also releasing a **2005 Ulises Valdez Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** and a **2005 Hyde Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir**. The wines are sold through a mailing list at www.paulhobbs.com. The wines were offered for sale at the WOPN and a call to the winery at 707-824-9879 may be rewarded.



Paul Lato Wines Paul Lato bleeds Pinot Noir. He is a rare individual of great passion who is humble yet aristocratic, both humorous and charming, and with a smile that shows a zest for wine and the good life. Paul told me I was smart to be a Prince, because "Kings sit around doing nothing with their clothes off, and the Prince actually runs the show and knows everything that is going on." Paul is from Poland via Canada and his small production of Pinot Noir and Syrah each year (250 cases) has had a big impact on the Central Coast wine scene. His unique wines are sold through a mailing list at www.paullatowines.com or through the Wine Cask futures program. **2005 Paul Lato Duende Gold Coast Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 75 cases, \$50. This wine has it all. Gorgeous perfume and fruit, long, stylish and smooth in the mouth, this Pinot Noir delivers the sensuality and charisma that Pinot Noir so often promises, but rarely surrenders. This is the work of a true artisan and artist. I did not meet one seasoned taster at the event who did not love this wine. I admit it, I went 'gaga' for this one. Paul also makes a Syrah in the Pinot style which is to die for.



Scott Paul Wines Two of Scott Wright's inspirations and mentors were Greg La Follette and Ted Lemon. He is dedicated to handcrafting Oregon Pinot Noir using low yields (less than 1.7 tpa), organic/biodynamic viticulture, wild yeast fermentations, and limited use of new oak (no more than 20%). Alcohols are sensible (the 2004 and 2005 Le Paulée Pinots Noirs he was pouring were in the 13.1-13.8% range). He bottles his wines under Stelvin closures. Scott's Pinot Noirs are all about elegance and finesse. He personally exudes a soft spoken and unassuming passion for Pinot Noir. His winery and tasting room are located in Carlton at 128 S. Pine St. and the wines are also sold on the website at www.scottpaul.com. Scott also imports Burgundies and his website is filled with information on Burgundy. **2005 Scott Paul Le Paulée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** \$40, April 2007 release. Light in color and body, this wine delivers toasted herbs, cocoa, and cinnamon toast scents. Lovely red currents and wild strawberries on the palate made it difficult to spit out. The silky texture is alluring. This is a style of Pinot Noir for connoisseurs.

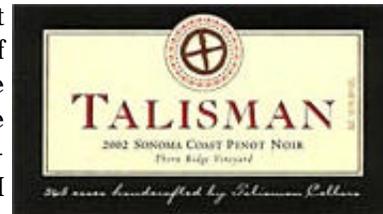


TR Elliott Theodore R Elliott has come to Pinot Noir late in his wine-making career. He spent considerable time crafting Cabernet at Carmenet Winery and then Chardonnay at Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards. He launched the TR Elliott label in 2002 with his family. The two 2004 releases were poured from magnum at WOPN. The wines are available on the website at www.elliottfamilycellars.com or phone 707-291-4559.

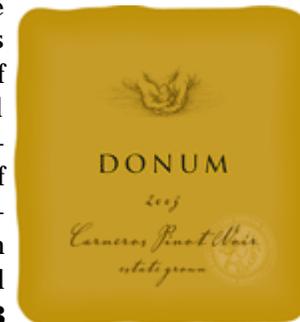
2004 TR Elliott Queste Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (14.3% alc., 320 cases, \$32) is primarily clone 777 from Hallberg Vineyard and exhibits darker fruits. **2004 TR Elliott Three Plumes Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.3% alc., 400 cases, \$32), is a blend of clones 115 and Pommard from Vine Hill Vineyard and shows off red fruits. Both are excellent examples of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir which often has warm spice and cola complementing the fruit. Admirable finesse, ripe tannins, and a juicy and mouthwatering finish.



Talisman Cellars Scott Rich learned his craft under Tony Soter at Etude in Carneros. He started his small label in 1993. Scott is a lover of unique terroir and he searches high and low for vineyards that are challenging and expressive. "I like to express terroir - that is the beauty of Pinot Noir - and that comes through in the more extreme vineyards." Each of his bottlings are typically 200-300 cases. Last year I tasted through a vertical of his Pinot Noirs (see Volume 5 of the *Pinot-File*) and found them to be terrific wines that showed their age extremely well. Look for a podcast interview of Scott Rich on Grape Radio in the near future. Scott's wines are sold through a mailing list at www.talismancellars.com. The phone number is 707-258-5722. **2004 Talisman Ted's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 208 cases, \$40. This is the crowd pleaser in the lineup that is drinking beautifully now. Wilted red roses and wild red cherries come to mind in the bouquet. There are nicely composed red fruits and magic spice. A very gulpable Pinot Noir.



The Donum Estate Anne Moller-Racke knows Carneros. She has tended the vines here for more than 20 years. Since leaving Buena Vista in 2001, she has concentrated on one estate Pinot Noir (The Donum Estate) and the wines of Robert Stemmler both sourced from the over 250 acre estate she retained adjacent to the Buena Vista property (originally named Tula Vista, it was rechristened Donum Estate) The current winemaker is Kenneth Juhasz (also of Auteur). Anne was pouring a vertical of the Donum Estate Pinot Noir, 2003-2004-2005. These are very Burgundian and earthy-styled Pinot Noirs, with explosive flavors of plums, candied cherries and a touch of game. Full and expansive in the mouth, they are classy and polished Pinot Noirs. The **2003 Donum Estate Carneros Pinot Noir** (\$60) is very mellow now with dusty tannins. The **2004 Donum Estate Carneros Pinot Noir** (\$60, now available) is a flashy drink with that magic Burgundy *je ne sais quoi*. The **2005 Donum Estate Pinot Noir** (not released) is still a brooding wine with great structure and tremendous concentration. The wines are in the 600 case production range and sold through the website at www.thedonumestate.com.



PERFECTLY FINE PINOTS

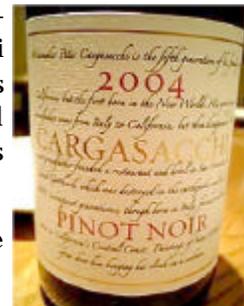
2005 Cargasacchi/Point Concepcion Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir
2004 Churchill Cellars Bella Luna Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir
2005 Elkhorn Peak Cellars Napa Valley Pinot Noir
2004 Keller Estate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2004 Ken Brown Cargasacchi Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir
2004 Red Car Amour Fou RRV Pinot Noir and 2005 The Aporist Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir
2004 Schug Carneros Estate Pinot Noir
2003 Rippon Central Otago Pinot Noir
2005 Tantara Silacci Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir
2004 Thomas Fogerty Winery Rapley Trail Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir
2005 Windward Vineyard Monopole Paso Robles Pinot Noir

Cargasacchi Dinner & Tasting

One of the offline events I attended was a comprehensive tasting of Cargasacchi Vineyard and Jalama Vineyard Pinot Noirs. Cargasacchi Vineyard is 16 acres planted in 1999 to Dijon clone 115 (scion selection from Burgundy's Morey Saint Denis), and located at the extreme west end of the Santa Rita Hills (an excellent map of many of the vineyards and wineries in the Sta. Rita Hills appellation is available at staritahills.com). The soils are ancient sea floor sediment. Peter Cargasacchi is a meticulous farmer who continues in his family's farming heritage which dates to the early 1900s. A second vineyard, Jalama, was planted a couple of years ago in the Jalama area outside of Lompoc. His grapes have been highly sought after. Many of the winemakers who source fruit from Peter were at the event. The table was filled with 46 wines! In addition, the last wines started by Michael Bonacorssi before his untimely death in 2004 and finished by Greg Brewer, were opened. Stories about Michael were affectionately bantered about the room and Michael was toasted for his undying commitment to crafting fine wine. Wines on the table included multiple vintages from notable producers like Ampelos, Babcock, Brewer-Clifton, Cargasacchi, Hitching Post, Ken Brown, Loring Wine Co, Point Concepción, Pali, Siduri, and Waltzing Bear. My favs: 2002 and 2005 Point Concepción Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir. Oh, there were also at least 50 other Pinot Noirs available for sampling from California, Oregon and Burgundy.

Cargasacchi wines are substantial and muscular interpretations of Peter's vineyards. For 2005, there is a Jalama Vineyard Santa Barbara County and Cargasacchi Vineyard Santa Rita Hills bottling. **Point Concepción** wines are described as "food friendly," and, indeed, they are lighter-styled with more red fruit and floral highlights. The 2005 Santa Barbara County was released in February. The wines are available through a mailing list at www.pointconcepcion.com.

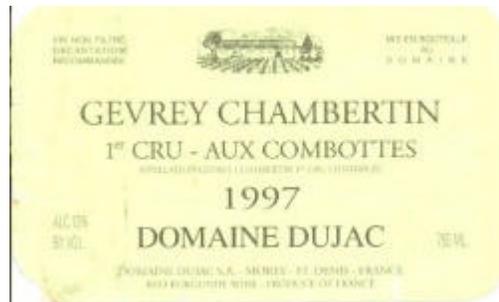
For more tasting notes of Cargasacchi wines, go to Eric Anderson's excellent wine blog at www.grape-nutz.com.



Domaine Dujac Dinner

It has become a tradition to do a Burgundy tasting and dinner of some type in conjunction with the WOPN event. This year we decided to feature the red Burgundies of Domaine Dujac. For those regular readers of the *PinotFile*, you know I am a fan of Dujac wines. As I wrote recently, "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 taste buds stand

erect. 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.” Domaine Dujac was begun in 1967 and currently has holdings in Clos de la Roche, Clos St. Denis, Bonne Mares, Echezeaux and Charmes-Chambertain. The wines are all aged in 100% new oak. Owner and winemaker Jacques Seysses crafts wines that are light in color and less extracted and dense than many other Burgundy estates. Never blockbusters, they are elegant and balanced. Seysses says, “It is a mistake to take all of this too seriously. Some winemakers become big-headed and think they are changing the world. But I’m not an artist, I’, just trying to make good wine.” Jacques Seysses and his son, Jeremy, also make a line of negociant wines under the label Dujac Fils et Perè.



In between the **1996 Le Grande Dame Champagne** and the **1990 Yquem**, we cooed and awed over six Dujac wines. We also tried a **1999 F. Mugnier Chambolle Musigny les Fuees 1er Cru** and **1999 Groffier Chambolle Musigny Les Amoureuses 1er Cru**, but really, they could not offer the enchanting aromatics and flavors that the Dujac wines did.

2004 Dujac Fils et Perè Gevrey Chambertain (\$55) Perfectly fine but not particularly complex or challenging.

2004 Domaine Dujac Morey St. Denis (\$75) Not the aromatics or breeding of the Grand Crus, but a very satisfying drink with a satiny texture from start to finish. Interesting pepper and anise flavors. Elegant, but not wimpy and perfectly balanced. Best wine in this lineup for the money by far.

2004 Domaine Dujac Gevrey Chambertain Aux Combottes 1er Cru (\$130). Dreamy aromatics of roses, cherries and spice. Smooth as silk. Very giving at this early stage.

2004 Domaine Dujac Chambolle Musigny Les Gruenchers 1er Cru (\$150). A lot of quality stuffing here, with considerably more power and structure than the Combottes. However, it is a fledgling wine, which only offers hints of what it will become. Definitely cellar this one.

1997 Domaine Dujac Clos St. Denis This can be a burly wine, but in this vintage it is a pussycat. Endless spices with cashmere tannins. Wild herbs and exotic spices leap out on the nose. Really sexy juice.

2001 Domaine Dujac Clos de la Roche This Grand Cru vineyard always struts its royalty for Dujac. There is an amazing amount of power here but the wine slides down like warm syrup. A little animaly, some tea-like edge, and sturdy red and blue flavors. This is a killer that in all good sense shouldn't be opened for another ten years.

Prodigal Wines: A Work in Progress

On my drive to the World of Pinot Noir recently, I stopped by the Santa Rita Hills to meet Stephen and Mary Russell, discuss their new wine label, and sample their wines. The name “Prodigal” comes from the career path that Stephen Russell has followed. His frank introduction to the wine world came when, after graduating from U.C. Davis with a degree in enology in 1960, he went to work at Gallo as their first formally-trained enologist. He quickly discovered that corporate winemaking was not his interest. He can wax humorously about his experiences at Gallo. He talks about Hearty Burgundy, the well known red wine composed of Zinfandel, Merlot, and almost anything else that was available at the time. The challenge was to make Hearty Burgundy taste consistently the same despite the fact that the types and sources of grapes varied widely with each vintage. Stephen’s claim to fame at Gallo is that he created a process for carbonization of Ripple!

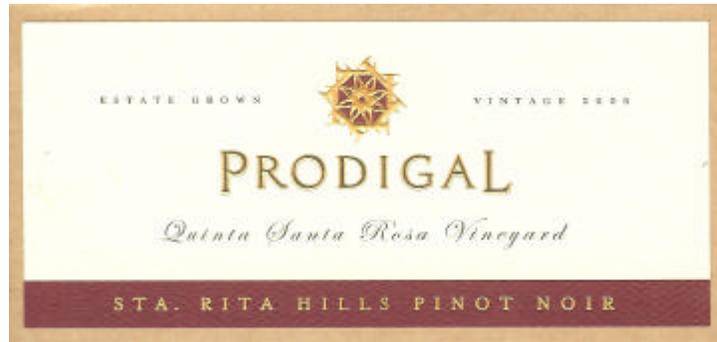
After a failed attempt to purchase Freemark Abbey, Stephen left the wine industry and returned to school where he obtained his DVM and PhD degrees. He pursued a successful career in cancer research. More recently he advises researches about acquiring research grants from various sources.

In 2001, he decided to do something with his lovely wife, Mary, who had followed him about faithfully through the years. They bought a house and property in the southeast corner of the Sta. Rita Hills appellation, and Prodigal Wines was born. The “prodigal son” had returned, dedicated to capturing the essence of Pinot Noir.



The Russells have planted 4 acres to Pinot Noir (Dijon clones 667 and 777, and some vines from cuttings from Julia’s Vineyard in Cambria) and Pinot Gris (clone 146). The young vineyard, named Quinta Santa Rosa Vineyard, is managed by Jeffrey Newton and associates (Coastal Vineyard Care). The first vintage, 2005, was crafted by local winemaker, Norm Yost (Flying Goat), and will be released in the spring of this year.

The three of us sat down at a dining table looking out over the valley and tasted through the 2005 wines and several barrel samples from the recent 2006 harvest.



2005 Prodigal Sta. Rita Hills Appellation Pinot Noir 14.5% alc. 275 cases. This is a blend of grapes from the estate Quinta Santa Rosa Vineyard and Wädenswil clone 2A from Rio Vista Vineyard. Aging was in a mixture of new and neutral French oak barrels (made in the USA by World Cooperage of Missouri) for 12-16 months. This is a polished wine with delicate cherry, tea, and pepper flavors. Tannins are reigned in, and it finishes with a tangy acidic edge.

2005 Prodigal Quinta Santa Rosa Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 187 cases. This wine is composed of 667 clone only. A richer and more creamy Pinot than the one above, it has a velvety mouth feel and bright red fruits on a long finish. A very attractive ethereal style.

Also tasted were barrel samples of 2006 667 clone in new oak, 2006 667 clone in neutral oak, 2005 667 from Rio Vista Vineyard, and 2006 Fiddlestix Vineyard 115 clone in new oak. The Fiddlestix was really impressive with gorgeous aromatics and gregarious fruit and spice. Happily, Russell will add this Fiddlestix wine to the 2006 Appellation blend. Russell is still evaluating sources in the Santa Rita Hills and his project is a work in progress. I was impressed by his wine knowledge and scientific background which should hold him in good stead. In addition, Mary is developing a sophisticated wine palate, and her contributions to blending decisions will be invaluable. The ultimate production goal is about 500 cases.

50 cases of estate Pinot Gris were produced in an Alsatian style. The wine was held on its lees in neutral French oak barrels for six months and then in stainless steel for an additional six months, also *sur lies*. The yeast autolysates have given it that Alsatian character. The 2005 vintage is very French in character.

Prodigal Wines will be available directly from the winery after the spring release. Prices and offerings will be posted on the winery's web site at www.ProdigalWines.com. Those on the mailing list will be offered priority to purchase. Tastings are available by appointment by phoning 805-688-0476.

2007 Santa Barbara County Wine Futures

This year marks the 18th year of Wine Cask Santa Barbara County Wine Futures, an offering of the finest selection of rare, hard to find, and selected barrels of wines produced by the top wineries in Santa Barbara County. Ken Margerum, owner of the Wine Cask wine store and restaurant in Santa Barbara (restaurant in Los Olivos as well) personally selects the wines for this offering. A minimum of 6 bottles must be purchased, except for very unique wines where the limit is 2 or 3 bottles. The futures prices are 10-20% off the retail price. Tastings are held at the Wine Cask Restaurant and El Paseo Restaurant at 813 Anacapa Street in Santa Barbara on Saturday March 10th and Saturday April 28th (free). Many of these wines will be sold out after the initial tasting on March 10th - you have been forewarned. Visit the website at www.winecask.com to review the offerings, read the wine reviews, and order the wines. The phone number is 800-436-9463. Remember, 2005 is a great vintage in the Central Coast.

Some of the wines in the wine futures catalog that caught my fancy include:

2005 Arcadian Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release \$49.95, futures price \$39.95)

2005 Arcadian Dierberg Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release \$49.95, futures price \$39.95)

2005 Au Bon Climat Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir (release \$49.95, futures price \$39.95)

2005 Au Bon Climat Estate Knox Alexander Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$44.95, futures price \$35.95, magnums available)

2005 Au Bon Climat Nielson Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$49.95, futures price \$39.95)

2005 Au Bon Climat Bien Nacido Vineyard "30th Harvest" Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$74.95, futures price \$59.95)

2005 Drew Family Cellars "Potbelly Block" Cargasacchi-Jalama Vineyard Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir (release price \$35, futures price \$27.95)

2004 Fiddlehead Lollapalooza Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release price \$55, futures price \$43.95)

2006 Flying Goat Dierberg Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$39.95, futures price \$32.95)

2006 Flying Goat Rio Vista Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release price \$45, futures price \$35.95)

2005 Foley Clone 2A Rancho Santa Rosa Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release price \$45, futures price \$35.95)

2005 Foxen Sea Smoke Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release price priceless, futures price \$74.95, 3 bottle limit)

2005 Paul Lato Duende Gold Coast Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$49.95, futures price \$39.95)

2005 Longoria Fe Ciega Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release price \$49, futures price \$39.95)

2005 Native9 Rancho Ontiveros Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$52, futures price \$41.95)

2005 Sea Smoke Botella Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (release price \$40, futures price \$35.95), **2005 Sea Smoke Southing Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (release price \$54, futures price \$48.95), and **2005 Sea Smoke Ten Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (release price \$75, futures price \$67.95). 2 bottle limit on all three releases.

2005 Vino V Solomon Hills Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (release price \$45, futures price \$37.95)

