

**Pinot Noir and
Champagne -Is
Anything Else
Really Matter?**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Eric Kent : Artistry In & On the Bottle

About 18 months ago, I first wrote about Eric Kent Wine Cellars (*PinotFile*, Volume 5, Issue 36). Paul Root, of Root's Cellar (a fine wine retailer in Healdsburg), first turned me onto this producer, and since then Eric Kent has become quite a noteworthy cult winery.

I must inform you, however, there really is no Eric Kent. "Eric" is owner Kent Humphrey's middle name and "Kent" is his first name. Being on the humble side, Kent just could not bear to be blatantly eponymous. He also could not imagine people in a toney restaurant asking the sommelier for a bottle of "Humphrey" Pinot Noir. So, he inverted his first and middle names and his "nom de vin" came to be. In addition, designing a logo with two nice, short words seemed a good way to go.

Kent grew up in California around a family table that enjoyed wine. His college path, however, was not initially wine, but rather the PhD program at University of California Berkeley in French (happily with a full ride as a Regent's Fellow). He soon opted out of academia and pursued a job in advertising. He started his own agency and the company grew to more than fifty people. That experience gave him an in-depth look at big companies - their politics, creative accounting, and inherent failure to put people first. Kent's youthful idealism was decimated in the end and the work nearly "sucked the joy out of life." During these ten years of real-life experiences, he sampled, savored, collected and delighted in wine. When he finally decided to leave the advertising world, his friends and family encouraged him to seek a career in wine.

Initially he considered attending University of California Davis for wine-making training, but realized that many of the wines he most admired were made by people who had no formal training in wine. So he sought some hands-on experience and worked at two different winery facilities. A couple of years later, he has offered the chance to obtain some really classy fruit from top-notch vineyards. While a year earlier than he had planned, he couldn't pass up the opportunity and Eric Kent Wine Cellars was born. Kent chose to make Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah since these were the varietals that gave him the most personal pleasure. He produced 375 cases in the inaugural 2003 vintage. He has since reached nearly 2,000 cases a year. Given his run-in with big business, he still plans to stay small with growth stopping between 3,000 and 4,000 cases. The plan for that buildup is sensibly paced and he is content to take whatever time is necessary to do it well.



Kent and his wife, Colleen, an accomplished artist, decided one day over a dinner of burgers and Zinfandel to showcase artists on their bottles. The two work in harmony, she assisting him in making blending decisions and he helping her in choosing the individual art works that grace the bottles of Eric Kent wines. Kent and Colleen freelance as an art director/copywriter team to help pay for their winemaking project.

The works of art that are part of the front label of every Eric Kent wine are quite striking. The art is from deserving, but as yet undiscovered talent. Each artist brings a unique vision that compliments the spirit behind the wines. With every vintage, a portion of the wine sales is donated to help support the work of struggling artists. As Paul Root so aptly put it, "The wines speak for themselves and the labels add another dimension to the wine by creating a built-in discussion with every cork pulled."

The labels for vintages 2003 (left), 2004 (center) and 2005 (right) Eric Kent Stiling Vineyard Pinot Noir are shown below. The artists are from left to right, Erik Jacobsen, Kevin Keul, and Darin Fenn. For more information on the artists, visit the Eric Kent website at www.erickentwines.com.



2004 Eric Kent Wine Cellars Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 15.2% alc., 250 cases, \$35. Don Stiling left his corporate career and planted a 35-acre vineyard on Goldridge loamy soil in the Russian River Valley in 1986. Vineyard manager Jesus Garcia has assisted the Stilings for 14 years overseeing the vineyard. Kent's wine is sourced from two different vineyard blocks, one hillside and one on the valley floor. The grapes are primarily a field selection of Swan clone. 75% of the grapes were de-stemmed, but not crushed, and placed on top of the remaining 25% whole cluster fruit. The wine was aged for 14 months in 60% new French oak. *An appealing nose of darker fruits especially plum with vanillin highlights. With some air time, the initially shallow fruit takes on shoulder pads and struts out brutish dark berry and current flavors tinged with oak and herbs. The wine is well-rounded and mellow with only a little alcohol peeking out on the finish after a time in the glass.*

2005 Eric Kent Wine Cellars Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 300 cases, \$38.25. Darin Fenn's label is a black and white photograph taken with a handheld 35 mm camera and not changed in any way. It features a winter skating rink in Budapest. You will notice that some of the skaters' images are blurred by motion while the observers are clearly outlined. *The aromatics are a little funky on lift off, but then become quite interesting with dark cherries, spice-particularly cinnamon, oak notes and a hint of coconut. Cherries, spice and herbs compose the flavors which are presented on a soft and elegant platform. The finish is clean and refreshing. The whole package is harmonious.* Note: Kent feels this wine will reach an even better drinking window given another 6 -12 months.

2005 Eric Kent Wine Cellars Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.9% alc., 250 cases, \$36.25. Mary Black is the artist on the label (left, below). The hot wax based artwork was created on several layers of paper and wax which created many levels of texture and color. Her work mirrors her interest in Jungian psychology, whatever that is. Most of the fruit is from the Stiling Vineyard. *This is a terrific Chardonnay with a lovely nose of butter (100% MLF), lemon and roasted nuts. There is a plenty of toasty oak, citrus and crème brulee flavors and the finishing acidity is on point. A meal in itself.*

2005 Eric Kent Wine Cellars Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 15.1% alc., 225 cases, \$35. The artist on the label (right, below), is Francis Berry. It depicts two nudes cleverly covered up and being observed by a fellow with a colorful fedora. The artist says it “weaves together tragicomic humor and spontaneity.” *The aromatic profile here is more austere with mineral, tropical fruit and citrus notes. The texture is more creamy with less prominent acidity. Crème brulee and oak are present but subtle. This doesn't have the punch of the Russian River Valley bottling, but will be a better match with food. The alcohol is so well integrated that it adds structure without being intrusive.*



2005 Eric Kent Wine Cellars Sonoma County Rosé 14.4% alc., \$19. *Pale orange in color. Intriguing nose of orange peel and pear with a whisper of heat. Clean and crisp on the palate with flavors of citrus and berries. Perfectly fine.*

In the future, Kent will be introducing an additional Pinot Noir from the Windsor Oaks Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. Kent expects his two Pinot Noir bottlings to be quite distinct from one another. He is also thrilled with the line-up of 2006 label artists.

Eric Kent Wine Cellars is located in Santa Rosa, CA. The wines are produced at a Santa Rosa custom crush facility. 707-527-9700. Members of the winery's E/K Direct Club receive 20-25% discounts. Join the club at www.erickentwines.com. Demand has increased markedly in the last year (the 2005 vintage is completely sold out) and most all of the wine is now sold to E/K Direct Club members. This is so Kent can guarantee that all new club members can order up to a half a case of any or all the wines as part of their pre-release club shipments. There is still some retail and restaurant distribution. Paul Root at Root's Cellars in Healdsburg receives an allocation each year as well - join his e-mail list at www.rootscellar.com. The 2006 Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley Chardonnay will be released in late March or early April, 2008. The two Syrahs will follow in mid-October of the same year. I believe the bottles/art work will become collectables.

Churchill Wine Cellars

Ken and Susan Churchill are also refugees from the corporate world who sold their environmental consulting business and moved to the Russian River Valley to make ultra-premium Pinot Noir. Fortunately, they found prime vineyard property on Olivet Lane and lovingly manage their one-acre estate Bella Luna Vineyard with sustainable and precision farming. Anthony Austin is the talented winemaker who is a legend in Santa Barbara County. In 1975, the Firestones started Santa Barbara's first modern-day commercial winery and their first winemaker was Anthony Austin. Austin crafted many memorable award-winning wines for both Firestone and his own eponymous label, Austin Cellars. Currently he is also the winemaker at Sonoma Coast Vineyards.

The Bella Luna vineyard is planted on sandy loam soil to Dijon clone selections, including 115, 667, 777 and the newer 459 clone. The vines are tight spaced at 4' x 4'. Irrigation is kept to a minimum. The small size of the vineyard allows for precision viticulture.

The **2004 Churchill Cellars Russian River Valley Blend Pinot Noir** and **2004 Churchill Cellars Bella Luna Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** were reviewed previously in the *PinotFile*

2005 Churchill Cellars Bella Luna Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 233 cases, \$45. A nine day cold soak with 10% whole clusters. Aged 18 months in 50% new French oak which is air dried for 36 months. *Right in step with the luscious 2004 edition. Terrific aromatics featuring candied cherry, spice, and newly-sawn wood. Easily approachable with layers of sweet red Pinot fruit, leather, mocha, oak and herbs. Fine and creamy in texture with integrated tannins and impeccable balance. Will only improve with cellaring. The future looks bright for this young vineyard.*

Churchill Cellars is located at 1574 Olivet Rd, Santa Rosa, CA. 707-578-5393. The wines may be purchased on the website at www.churchill-cellars.com. Discounts are available to wine club members.



Alcina Cellars

Alcina Cellars is another of the young hounds that have joined the California Pinot Noir race. Wine lover Greg Piatigorski (Greg P to his friends) learned his winemaking craft under Greg LaFollette (Tandem, DeLoach) and has looked to winemaker Richard Davis (former assistant winemaker at Tandem and now winemaker at Londer Vineyards, Halleck Vineyards and his own label, Calstar Cellars) for additional guidance. His initial vintage, 2002, produced small amounts of Pisoni Vineyard and Sangiacomo Vineyard Pinot Noir. He has expanded his vineyard sources and in the 2005 vintage released 2 appellation and 3 vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs in addition to Syrah and Petite Syrah.

I recently tasted through the 2005 lineup of Alcina Cellars Pinot Noirs. Because of the vagaries of weather in 2005, yields on the Sonoma Coast were tiny at 0.3 tons per acre, but more normal in the Russian River Valley at 3 tons per acre. I found the entire lineup quite interesting with all wines showing an admirable style exemplified by elegance. Alcohols were 14.5% or above but were well-integrated. All wines were closed with a synthetic stopper.

2005 Alcina Cellars Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$45. 20% new oak. *Light in weight and light on its feet. Bright perfume of cherry, cola and cooked strawberries. The wood-tinged cherry and sassafras flavors were enhanced by fine sweet tannins leading to a long and tangy finish.*



2005 Alcina Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$45. *Earth, mushroom, forest floor and black cherry aromas develop with swirling. Delicious cherry cola, bittersweet chocolate and a hint of tobacco lurking in the background. Plenty of power but silky and blessed with finesse. The clean finish of lovely dark cherries lasts and lasts.*

2005 Alcina Cellars Ramondo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$53. Ramondo Vineyard is located in Sebastopol and straddles the line between the warmer Russian River Valley and cooler Sonoma Coast fruit profile. *The darkest wine of the lineup with the most body and richness. The nose is closed with brooding dark tarry aromas still reticent after two hours. Teeth-staining plush fruit with edges of oak and chocolate. Despite its heft, it is supple and the finish is silky. A big mouthful that is currently shy and would benefit from decanting and/or aging.*

2005 Alcina Cellars Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 264 cases, \$53. This vineyard is located in the Petaluma Gap and yields are low ranging from a ton to a ton and a half per acre. *Elegant and easy to drink, this wine is dominated by oak. There is plenty of toast and some funk in the nose and char and green tea embrace the cherry and red berry flavors.*

2005 Alcina Cellars Silacci Vineyard Monterey County Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$53. The Silacci Vineyard is located 5 minutes north of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA in Monterey County. Its cool location makes ripening always a concern and this wine seems to show a failure to reach optimum phenolic ripeness. *The most exotic wine in the lineup. Nutmeg, tomato, and floral scents. The flavors range from tart berry to Asian spice to graham with lively tart acidity on the backend. Very unusual and light-bodied for a Silacci Vineyard Pinot Noir.*



Alcina Cellars is located at 231 Market Place #404, San Ramon, CA. 415-722-9393. The wines are sold to a mailing list and distributed to a number of distinguished restaurants. Sign up for the mailing list at www.alcinacellars.com. The 2006 vintage lineup has just been released: Sonoma Coast, Russian River Valley, Ramondo Vineyard Sonoma Coast, and Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast.

Bush-Field Estate

Bush-Field Estate Vineyards and Winery is located among 129 acres of sprawling hills spotted with California oak trees and other native brush. A 2.5-acre lake on the estate is a favorite site for spotting blue herons, egrets and migratory geese. Situated in the Sonoma Valley AVA, the vineyard is the highest in Sonoma County, some 2359 feet above sea level and high enough for an occasional drop of snow. 5 acres of Pinot Noir were planted in 1999 on this magnificent site above Jack London State Park in Sonoma County.

Proprietor Alan Benfield Bush is a successful businessman who was managing director of hair stylist education at Vidal Sasson and later founder of the ABBA Pure and Natural Hair Care line. He is a noted motivational speaker and product innovator in the fashion and beauty industry. In 1997, he sold his product line and bought his ranch in 1997, following his dream of owning a vineyard that began at the age of 19.

I tasted the most recent three vintages of the Bush-Field Sonoma Mountain Top Sonoma Valley Pinot Noirs (the inaugural 2002 vintage is sold out). The quality of the wine improved with each vintage.

2003 Bush-Field Estate Vineyards & Winery Sonoma Mountain Top Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$54. *Super-ripe fruit with plum and dark berries on the nose. Flavors tended toward prune and port. Marked drying tannins on the finish.*

2004 Bush-Field Estate Vineyards & Winery Sonoma Mountain Top Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$54. *Unusual aromatics with wet stone, cranberry, violets and even peach. Very ripe fruit flavors on the palate with currents predominating. Gentle finish.*

2005 Bush-Field Estate Vineyards & Winery Sonoma Mountain Top Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$54. *A shy nose of red Pinot fruits and noticeable oak. Deep, roasted cherry flavors with oak toast, herbs and a hint of mocha java and mountain dust. Finishes with lively acidity. The best of the three wines.*



Bush-Field wines are distributed to retail stores in Northern California. The website is www.bush-field.com. For more information on Alan Benfield Bush, consult www.AlanBenfieldBush.com. Guest suites with views of the San Francisco and San Pablo Bays are available to loyal customers. \$500 for two days and one night. Ideal for two, can sleep four. Relaxing days can be spent hiking and swimming ending with a Jacuzzi under the stars.

Note: The winery's blog references the expression, "good wine needs no bush." According to James Gabler in *Wine Into Words*, "this is an ancient proverb, far antedating Shakespeare's time where, in the epilogue of *As You Like It*, Rosalind says, 'If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue. Yet to good wine they do use good bushes, and good plays prove the better by the help of a good epilogue.' The proverb actually means that good wine needs no advertising and goes back, at least, to Roman days. Why the bush evolved as the symbol of good wine is not clear, but is probably derived from the wreath of ivy with which Bacchus was crowned and which is often shown twined around his staff. Given the complexity and confusion of the modern wine trade, perhaps Shakespeare was right, 'to good wine they do use good bushes.'"

Pinot Noir Acreage in US: Setting Record Straight

In the last issue of the *PinotFile*, I listed data from Mondial du Pinot on Pinot Noir acreage in the world (the year of their statistics was not stated but I assumed was timely). One of my readers, Linda LaFianza in Oregon gratefully pointed out the error in markedly underreporting Pinot Noir acreage for the United States. I researched this further, contacting Laura Burgess in the Oregon Field Office of the USDA, and she set me straight.

Exact figures are difficult to obtain because not all states report yearly and some do not, like California and Oregon, divide acreage into bearing acreage (in production) and non-bearing acreage (vines from 1 to 3 years old). Oregon has been a leader in this country in reporting wine-related statistics.

According to the USDA 2006 statistics (the USDA website is www.nass.usda.gov):

California 27,518 total acres of Pinot Noir planted (24,188 total acres of bearing age)
 Oregon 8,884 acres of Pinot Noir planted (7,481 total acres of bearing age)
 Washington 314 acres of Pinot Noir planted
 New York 235 acres of Pinot Noir planted (2002 statistics only available currently)
 Pennsylvania 12 acres of Pinot Noir planted

The total United States Pinot Noir acreage in production is at least 32,230 acres, only 6% of the total wine grape acreage of 505,665 acres in the United States. (This total does not include small amounts of Pinot Noir planted in several states other than the five listed above.)

New Websites for Wine

Vinismo The “Wikipedia of Wine.” Vinismo is patterned after other wikis, such as Wikipedia and Wikitravel which poses a question and let others answer it. Nicolas Ritous and Evan Prodromous have started www.vinismo.com welcoming everyone to write and edit wine information. Early critics of the site say if it becomes too academic it will lack appeal. In addition, the interface for editing an article is a bit daunting at present for the non-wiki user.

Winerybound This site, www.winerybound.com is a free travel website for wine enthusiasts to plan their wine touring vacations. Using Google API, visitors to the site can plot their wine tour, personalizing their trip and connecting each stop along the way. A similar service will be available soon on the PinotFile website (look for big changes next year!).

Integrated Viticulture Online University of California Davis’ new website, iv.davis.edu, allows users to access current and past studies on viticulture done by faculty or anyone affiliated with the university system.

Story Teller Wine Company Head storyteller, Michael Alberty is a 20-year veteran of the coffee and wine retail world. He also was a national college debate champion, edited a book about international environmental issues, and did his time behind many deli and espresso counters. Along with several other “wine pirates,” he has opened a retail store in Portland, Oregon. Michael is an advocate for good wines that tell an interesting story about where they come from. His electronic newsletter is an entertaining read. We all enjoy wine more when we know about the character who made it and the story behind it. Heck, my entire newsletter is based on this fact. Recently Michael was offering some excellent Oregon Pinots. The website is www.storytellerwine.com.



Small Sips of Pinot

Here are some notes on Pinot Noirs I have enjoyed sampling recently.



2005 Kendric Vineyards Marin County Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 160 cases, \$30. Winegrower Stewart Johnson (pictured) farms an 8.5 acre Pinot Noir vineyard in northern Marin County and a Syrah vineyard in the Sierra Foothills. 2004 was the first harvest for the Pinot Noir vineyard, leased from the Corda family. Seven clones are planted. Total production of both wines is 600 cases. Some Pinot Noir fruit is sold to Miller Wine Works in Napa. A very like-

able aromatic profile with spice, notably nutmeg, toast and red berries. Light and satiny in texture, the woody and herbal accented cherry fruit is shy but pleasing. Kendric Vineyards wines may be ordered on the website, www.kendricvineyards.com.



2005 Twin Oaks Cellars Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$42. Young winemaker, Mark Weiner, learned his trade from Ed Kurtzman, Bill Brosseau, Brian Loring and Adam Lee. This first vintage was produced at Crush Pad in San Francisco. The clones include the three most popular Dijon varieties, 115, 667 and 777. *Bing cherry, strawberry, toast and Asian spice dominant the appealing aromatics. Red fruit driven, there is a touch of oak and pencil lead on the lively and slightly hot finish. Soft and smooth.* A 2006 Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and a 2006 Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir are available also. The wines are distributed in fine retail wine stores and may be order from the website: www.twinoakcellars.com.



2005 Du Mol Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$60. This established producer has a stellar lineup of wines including Pinot Noir, Syrah, Chardonnay and Viognier. Owners Michael Verlander and Kerry Murphy tend to lead a low profile with very minimal public exposure and let their wines speak for themselves. The winemaker and viticulturist is talented Andy Smith. In addition to the Russian River Valley bottling, there are three special Pinot Noirs called "aiden," "ryan," and "finn" each of which contain fruit from a different combination of Russian River and Green Valley vineyards. *This is something special from start to finish. A perfume of violets and lavender gives way in the glass to syrupy dark cherry and toast. Nicely focused flavors of rich dark cherries and berries with a deft hint of oak and fennel. Creamy in texture with a full mouth feel, this wine will find many fans.* There is some retail (ie Brown Derby in Missouri, www.brownderby.com) and restaurant distribution, but most of the wine is sold through a mailing list to Pre-release Members. Join the list at www.dumol.com. 925-254-8922.



2005 Hayman & Hill Santa Lucia Highlands Reserve Selection No 41 Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$17. David Hayman (Sr. Vice-President, Blackstone Winery) and Dan Hill (Chief Winemaker, Blackstone Winery) share the winemaking duties for this label which features several different varietals. *Shy but pleasant aromas of forest floor and oak toast. Light and elegant, the flavors of cherry, cranberry, root beer and spice lead to a tangy finish with a citrus note. Much more elegance and less alcohol than many Pinot Noirs from the Santa Lucia Highlands. At this price, no complaints and a good back porch Pinot.* Distributed in retail stores.

2005 Verve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 325 cases, \$30. Proprietor Jerome Aubin is a barrel broker based in the Bay Area of California who imports barrels from Rousseau in Burgundy, Saint-Martin in Bordeaux, and Balazs in Hungary. In 2001 he started his own label with the assistance of winemaker Fred Scherrer who made the wines from 2001 until 2004. This vintage was made in Oakland by winemaker Loren Tayerle. The word "verve" refers to energy or vitality in expression of artistic ideas. Each label features the work of a special artist. This bottle displays the creation of Gerard Schneider of France. The grapes for this wine include an interesting combination of Swan, Beringer, Jackson and Dijon 115 clones. *Pure red fruit*



nose with Asian five spice, pepper and a little floral accent. Flavors of confected red fruits are light and simple. There is no intrusion of oak. The texture is soft and welcoming. Easily approachable and quite decent. Aubin Cellars is located at 6050 Colton Blvd., Oakland, CA 94611. 510-339-1070. There are Pinot Noirs available from other California appellations and the Willamette Valley of Oregon as well. Good retail distribution in California and the wine may be ordered on the informative website: www.aubincellars.com.

Wine Country Michelin Results

The second edition of the *Michelin Guide San Francisco, Bay Area and Wine Country* has just been released. The French Laundry remains the only three-star restaurant in the region. The newest restaurant to receive two stars were Chez TJ in Mountain View on the San Francisco Peninsula and the newly opened Restaurant at Meadowood in St. Helena.

New one-star restaurants include Madrona Manor in Healdsburg, Martini House in St. Helena and Redd in Yountville. Healdsburg's Dry Creek Kitchen in the Hotel Healdsburg lost its one star rating due to lack of consistency. Keller's Bouchon and Bistro Jeanty in Yountville and beloved Chez Panisse in Berkeley retained their one star. That makes a total of six stars in the tiny town of Yountville. Cyrus in Healdsburg retained its two star rating.

Many restaurateurs complain that the Michelin Guide is skewed toward restaurants that offer a quite, elegant, high-end and expensive scene. Many top restaurants in the Bay Area are more casual and may not appeal to Michelin raters. Like wine scores, which many people hate, Michelin stars still carry a lot of weight.

Michelin plans to release its Los Angeles Guide next month but most experts doubt there will be any three stars awarded.

La Paulée de Carlton

Scott Paul Wines has announced the 2nd Annual La Paulée of Carlton will be held Saturday, November 3, 2007. "La Paulée" is the name of the traditional end-of-harvest celebration in Burgundy as well as the name of one of Scott Paul's signature cuvées of Pinot Noir. The tradition of La Paulée in Burgundy goes back hundreds of years, and began with individual wine growers celebrating the harvest with a party for their vineyard and winery crew. Over time it evolved into what is now the famous "La Paulée de Meursault," wherein a few hundred top vigneronns of Burgundy gather at the Chateau de Meursault each November for a harvest feast. Guests bring many treasured bottles from their cellars to share.

The day in Carlton will kick off with a Grand Tasting from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. in the Scott Paul tasting room. The 2006 Scott Paul La Paulée and Audrey Pinot Noirs will be available as well as many great Premier Cru Burgundies. RSVP not required, but appreciated.

In the evening, beginning at 6:30 P.M. is the Grand Dinner. Seating is limited to 50 Pinot Noir lovers. In the spirit of La Paulée, guests are requested to bring a few special bottles of Burgundy or domestic Pinot Noir to share. Cost is \$100 per person. Chances are you will learn a Burgundian drinking song as well. RSVP with Kelly at 503-319-5827 or kellykarr@scottpaul.com.

Santa Maria Valley Wine Country Passport Event

Explore the wineries of California's Central Coast, the "Hidden Jewels" of the Santa Maria Valley on Saturday, December 1, 2007 from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.. Participating wineries include Foxen, Addamo Vineyards, Costa de Oro, Kenneth Volk Vineyards, Rancho Sisquoc, Cottonwood Canyon, McKeon-Phillips and Cambria. In addition, several wineries will be pouring at the Wine Cottage Bistro in Orcutt including Casa Torres Vineyards, Vaquero Cellars, Wild Horse Vineyards, Riverbench Vineyard and William James Cellars. Plan to eat at Wine Cottage Bistro as well. Owners Rebecca (right) and Aimee (known as "The Wine Girls")



are passionate about food and wine and the sophisticated menu belies the small town location. The current chef is Troy Tolbert from the Bradley Ogden group in the San Francisco Bay Area. Tickets are only \$30 per person including a SMVWC logo passport wine glass. Phone 805-938-0431.

If you want to make a trip of it and stay in another area of the Central Coast, I recommend Suite Edna B&B Cottage located at the original Edna Town site in the heart of Edna Valley. Owner Pattea Torrence operates a B&B in a lovingly maintained three bedroom house much like your grandmother probably lived in 75 years ago. Recently she has opened Old Edna Antiques and the quaint Deli Café adjacent to the house. Sandwiches, artisan cheeses, olive oils, local honey, espresso, baked goods and more. Wine country picnic lunches are a specialty. BBQ tri-tip sandwiches cooked slowly over Pinot Noir soaked oak barrel staves- wow! Wine service should be available in the near future as well. A perfect location for exploring the Edna Valley and Arroyo Grande wine country and wineries like Domaine Alfred, Talley Vineyards and Laetitia. For more information, check the website, www.olderdna.com or phone 805-544-8062.




PrinceofPinot.com

You are a true Pinot Geek when you
select a church where the sacramental
wine is Pinot Noir

**Pinot Noir and Champagne -
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Pinot Days Chicago

Steve Rigisich has put his Pinot Days Pinot Noir Festival, which began in San Francisco a few years ago, on the road, this time to Chicago, November 7-10, 2007. Pinot Noir tastings will be held at three Sam's Wines & Spirits store locations leading up to the Winemaker's Dinner on Friday, November 9th where 18 notable wineries will be pouring their Pinot Noirs. On Saturday, November 10th, the Grand Festival will feature over 50 producers from California and Oregon pouring several hundred Pinot Noirs. It is about time pinotphiles in the Midwest got in on the fun!

**For tickets, visit the website, www.PinotDays.com.
415-408-3360.**

Reidel Oregon Pinot Noir Glass Now Available

The Riedel Oregon Pinot Noir glass was introduced at this year's International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville, Oregon. The glass is an innovative design that combines the best features of the Vinum series Burgundy glass and the Sommelier series Grand Cru Burgundy glass. The glass is most similar to the Grand Cru Burgundy glass but has a slightly wider mid-bowl and tapers more at the top. I really like this glass and have begun to use it routinely for all my Pinot Noir tastings (not just Oregon). The glass enhances delicate aromatics, delivers the flavors, and accentuates the texture. It is perfect for vigorous swirling and the flared rim sits beautifully on my lower lip, allowing the juice to flow gently into my mouth without dribbling on my chin. The glasses are 9½" tall and hold 28¼ oz.

Initially George Reidel only made the glass available to restaurants and winery tasting rooms in Oregon. I now have seen two retail sources. Storyteller-wine.com (see page 7) is offering them for \$15, which is a steal. The *Wine Enthusiast*-affiliated International Wine Accessories latest catalog has an exclusive offering priced at \$49.95 for a set of two. The website is www.iwawine.com.

