

End of Year
Issue

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Headlines & Trends in 2007

** Ernest Gallo died at his Modesto, California home at the age of 87. Ernest and brother Julio built the largest wine empire in the world, starting in 1933 with a \$6,000 investment. By the 1990s, according to *Fortune* magazine, Gallo produced one out of every four bottles of wine sold in the United States and the winery's net worth was estimated to be at least \$600 million. Ellen Hawkes, in her unauthorized biography of the Gallo brothers titled *Blood & Wine*, related that in the late 1960s, executives at Gallo were allowed to purchase Gallo wine at discount each year. Most of them opted to buy robust red wines like Gallo's Burgundy Pastosos. Influenced by the popularity of this style of wine, Julio and his winemakers came up with Hearty Burgundy. It was assembled with wines from Napa and Sonoma in addition to Central Valley grapes. Joe Rochioli sold his estate Pinot Noir early on to Gallo as there was little market for Pinot Noir at the time and his grapes went into Hearty Burgundy. Hearty Burgundy was embraced by wine snobs and critics. By 1989, Gallo was trying to change its reputation for cheap wines and produced a Hearty Burgundy Limited Release in standard bottles so as to remove the wine from the jug category.

** The demand for Pinot Noir in California continued to exceed the supply. Some United States brands began buying imported Pinot Noir and imports of bulk wine overall were up more than 200% in 2006. Brown-Forman Beverages expanded their portfolio of Pinot Noir (Five Rivers, Jekel) by importing Bolla Pinot Noir from Italy, and producing Gala Rouge and Fetzer Vineyards Valley Oaks Vin De Pays D'Oc Pinot Noir, both from grapes sourced from the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France.

** Wine consumption continued to rise quickly in the United States, so much so that the United States is expected to pass France, Italy and Spain as the world's largest consumer of wine in 2008. Americans spend considerably more on fine wine than their European counterparts.

** Direct-to-consumer sales are increasing rapidly. According to MKF Research and New Vine Logistics, direct sales of wine increased 31% in 2006 and is growing at three times the overall growth rate of the wine industry. Direct sales of wines priced over \$30 were up by 68.5% in 2006.

** Along with increased consumption of wine in the United States has come an explosion of online wine retailers and wine bars in major cities.

** A Vinexpo study showed that wine has become more popular among the 20-25 year-old age group. These so-called millennials view wine as a healthy and high quality beverage and drinking wine is seen as a sign of maturity. A full embracement of wine by millennials is still being slowed by the cost and the snobbery associated with wine.

** Winemaking has sprouted up all over the United States including unseemly states like Tennessee, Montana, Connecticut, Kansas and Alaska. North Dakota, among many other states, now has a wine festival.

** Urban wineries have been around a long time, but they are now blossoming in converted industrial spaces that are zoned for light industry. The "urbanist" (a new term for the urban winemaker) is attracted by the low financial commitment required, often less than \$100,000. Examples are Harrington and Eno wineries in Berkeley, Lost Canyon Winery in Oakland, multiple wineries in the "Lompoc Wine Ghetto" and "Pinot Prison" in Lompoc, a converted apple processing plant in Sebastopol housing Kosta-Browne and WesMar among several others, and Hip Chicks Do Wine in Portland, Oregon. Two urban wineries have popped up in Sacramento.

** Consumer winemaking has become very popular. Crushpad, founded by Michael Brill in San Francisco, assists wine enthusiasts in making as little as a barrel of wine. With a \$5,000 to \$10,000 investment, an individual or group can make a premium barrel of wine, with final costs ranging from a sensible \$17 to \$40 per bottle. Crushpad started in 2004 with 200 barrels and in 2007 produced over 1,000 barrels. Their success has spawned a Crushpad Japan which opened in 2007 in Tokyo. Other similar operations in California include Grapemasters, founded by John Tracy and vintner Stephen Yafa at Owl Ridge Wine Services in Sebastopol, and Bacchus Winemaking Club in San Carlos, California and New Jersey.

** Oregon continues to be at the forefront of shared winery facilities. Carlton Winemakers Studio houses 9 wineries and was the first multi-occupant winery model in Oregon. They have since been joined by August Cellars (8 wineries), Adea (5 wineries), Laurel Ridge (5 wineries) and the Carlton Crush Cooperative (4 wineries). These facilities offer the vintner financial advantages as well as allowing more control compared to custom crush facilities and offer more visibility to customers.

** The consumer has shown an increasing thirst for information about wineries and winemakers and wine tourism has benefited as a result. There are now programs where consumers can participate in grape farming and winemaking (for example, Wine Boot Camp run by Affairs of the Vine), blending seminars, unique and personal tours, and innovative wine and food events. Web sites now play a large role in fostering wine tourism.

** Cameron Family Glass Packaging announced plans to build the first new glass plant in the United States in 30 years dedicated to manufacturing glass exclusively for the wine industry. Located in Port of Kalama, Washington, the plant has the largest hydro-powered electric glass furnace in the world. The wine bottles will be made in part from recycled glass from Washington and Oregon. Bronco Wine Co celebrated its fifth anniversary of Charles Shaw Wines ("Two-Buck Chuck") by announcing plans to build a glass manufacturing plant along Hwy 29 in Napa. The eco-sensitive structure has been in the planning stages for six years.

** More and more winegrowers are toying with mechanical harvesters over concerns that tighter immigration laws will reduce the work force required to harvest grapes. At present, 50% of wine grapes in California are harvested by machine but less than 10% of these are grown in the premium wine production regions of Napa and Sonoma. Mechanical harvesting can save considerable money with costs running about \$150 per acre compared to \$600 per acre for harvesting by hand. The new generation of French harvesters (\$180,000) are very gentle and can eliminate the need for a crusher-destemmer. However, they are best suited for thick-skinned Bordeaux grapes. Most Pinot Noir producers are re-

luctant to utilize mechanical harvesting because Pinot Noir is too thin skinned and delicate to survive the mechanized process. In addition, many Pinot Noir vintners prefer at least some whole clusters and fear that the quality of destemmed berries may deteriorate in transit compared to whole clusters.

** Basket presses are making a comeback. There are newer stainless steel variations of this old-fashioned piece of winemaking equipment. Basket pressing has the advantage of less extraction of harsh phenols from skins and seeds since it employs the gentle force of grape against grape rather than hydraulic compression. Less volume of press wine is obtained, but the color and quality of the press wine is better and more usable. Pinot Noir has been the most popular application of this new technology.

** Hand-held electronic noses which rapidly measure the volatile aromatic compounds in grapes in the field are available. Currently a research tool only, these devices simulate the human olfactory system and provide a sensitive indicator of grape ripeness on the vine. Up to now, picking decisions have been made using a number of keys including taste, seed color, pH, and berry weight.

** Alternatives to oak barrels are increasingly popular although vintners rarely talk about their use. They carry a stigma of being a cheap and artificial way of producing wine. With cost of high-quality French oak barrel approaching \$1,000, the use of oak alternatives such as staves, chips, dust or shavings is appealing to producers of low cost wines. The cost of barrels can add nearly \$3.00 to the retail cost of a bottle of wine. One technique that has been employed is adding oak blocks thru the bung hole of well-used barrels.

** As reported in *Wines & Vines*, oxygen-permeable polyethylene vessels called "Flextanks" can be used to store wine as efficiently as oak barrels. The tanks look like a super sized version of the polyethylene dispensers of catsup and mustard used at restaurants minus the spout on top. The tanks can passively micro-oxygenate wine and safely store it without evaporation. Oak alternatives can be used in conjunction with the vessels. Available from 50 to 600 gallons, the tanks are cleaner than barrels, occupy less room, are lighter, do not need topping, and don't wear out. The cost is one-tenth of traditional oak barrels. Used in Australia since 2003, a number of American wineries are now looking at this winemaking option. The romance of barrels is being assaulted on many fronts.

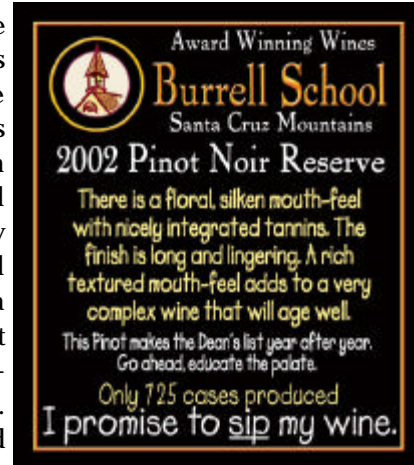
** Natasha Hughes, reporting in *decanter.com* (11/21/07), interviewed winemaker Matt Thomas from New Zealand who believes new oak barrels can be a source of *Brettanomyces* in a winery. He reasons that because of the increased demand for oak, more wood from infected sources is being used. Also, toasting barrels creates compounds that the *Brettanomyces* organism can feed on.

** Remote earth sensing as a tool to gauge the health of vineyards is now in widespread usage. One example is NDVI imaging (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index). A digital multi-spectral camera is mounted in a small airplane. The camera can recognize small differences in plant health and growth allowing the vineyard managers to fine tune irrigation, mulching, and treat disease pressure.

** The light brown apple moth (LBAM), which is native to Eastern Australia, has made its way to the San Francisco Bay area in 2007. It is very fond of apples and grapes. The moth's larvae damage the fruit that then becomes infected with botrytis. The larvae are tiny and very difficult to discover so it is a challenge to determine the level of infestation in a vineyard. Australia uses parasites and cover crops to control the moth. So far, the pest has caused little damage here.



** Wine Labels are under attack. In France, despite considerable protest, a new warning against drinking alcohol while pregnant is required. In the United States, the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau is planning to place warnings on wine of possible allergens from eggs (used in fining some wines), wheat (from barrels), and fish (gelatine used for clarification). This requirement is being proposed despite the fact that there has never been an allergic reaction directly linked to a fining substance in wine because the agents are removed before the wine is bottled. Allergic reactions to wine are limited to a few anecdotal reports and there is no firm scientific evidence that they occur. The European Union currently exempts egg-based products and fish gelatine as part of mandatory labeling requirements. The United States Treasury Department has proposed the required listing on labels of alcohol content (currently in place), servings per container and nutritional information such as calories, carbohydrates, fat and protein in a standard serving. There won't be any room on the back label of wine for case production, descriptions of the wine, name of the winemaker, cute stories or explanations of the name of wines. Does anyone really care that there is about 120 calories in a standard 5 oz drink of wine and whether it is nutritional? Finally, Oregon has updated its labeling laws. Varietal labeling for Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris (which can also be labeled Pinot Grigio), and Riesling must contain 90% of the varietal. For 18 other varietals often blended, up to 25% of other varieties may be included. Also, 95% of the fruit must come from the specified place on the label (previously 100%) allowing vintners to top off wine from other sources.



** The genome of Pinot Noir was decoded by French and Italian scientists in 2007 and reported in *Nature* (August 26, 2007). This is the first fruit plant to have its genome sequenced. 30,434 genes are in grape DNA, twice as many as the typical plant. 89 TPS genes (terpene synthases) and 27 pseudogenes were discovered which produce the fragrant resins and oils found in red grapes. A disproportionate number of genes - 43 - are involved in synthesizing resveratrol. There was a humorous response in *The Economist* to this announcement. "This may open the door for transgenic wines that grow in places where cultivation is impossible, are disease-resistant, and boost the levels of wine's beneficial ingredients. This could lead to adding a gene for producing acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin), which is valued for its favorable cardiovascular effects, and even inserting a gene to produce sildenafil citrate, the active ingredient in Viagra.. This would prevent the ultimate wine-induced humiliation."

** Whatever your personal beliefs are about the actual threat of global warming and the steps that need to be taken to counteract it, a few facts are clear. If carbon emissions continue unabated, California's annual temperature could rise 3-10° F by the end of this century. With this temperature rise comes concerns about rising sea levels, droughts, increased fires, extreme weather events such as heat waves and sustained heavy rains. A decrease in winter snow could mean a shortage of water for California agriculture in general and viticulture in particular. Wine grapes are particularly vulnerable to global warming because of the narrow temperature range in which they can grow. Researcher Gregory Jones of Southern Oregon University has said: "You add another couple of degrees on to warming in Fresno and it will become real challenging to grow anything other than table grapes or raisins because you can't produce premium high-quality wine in that hot of a climate without technology we really don't have today." One of the biggest challenges facing us is motivating people to change because the warming that has occurred in recent years has been beneficial to many grape-growing regions of the world. Areas like Napa and Sonoma can actually benefit initially from warming because they become cooler secondary to warming of interior valleys. There are very few wineries in the world that are carbon neutral. Oregon has taken a first step by the recently formed Governor's Carbon Neutral Challenge Initiative. 16 wineries have accepted the challenge from Governor Ted

Kulongoski, the Oregon Energy Council and the Oregon Wine Board to make their wineries more environmentally friendly by reducing their carbon footprint. At present, standards are being developed for carbon accounting and reporting.

** “Sustainability” is a vague term practically every winery and vineyard likes to use as a badge of concern for the environment, but for the most part it is too general a term to have meaning and lacks standards of validation. There are no national guidelines for sustainability, only regional and local sustainable farming programs. In California, the California Wine Institute is developing a certification program that will insure when wineries call themselves sustainable, they will have actually earned it. Napa and Lodi currently have regional certification programs. Oregon has three sustainable certifications: **LIVE** (Low Input Viticulture and Enology) which includes Salmon-Safe Certification (in California the equivalent is FFF or Fish-Friendly Farming Certification), **Organic** (use of synthetic materials strictly forbidden - no chemical fertilizers, pest icides or herbicides), and **Biodynamic** (organic plus). Currently there are over 100 vineyards in Oregon with LIVE certification. 30 wineries or vineyards in the United States have been certified biodynamic by Demeter USA. Brickhouse Vineyards in the Willamette Valley, owned by Doug Tonnell, has been certified organic since 1992 and was certified biodynamic by Demeter USA in 2005. One point of clarification is important here as the terms “organic wine” and “made with organic grapes” are often misunderstood. In an organic wine, 95% of the grapes must be certified organic and no sulfites are allowed. In wines made with organic grapes, 70% of the content is certified organic and the wine contains sulfites. Solar power is being embraced again as the technology has improved. More than 30 wineries in the United States now use it to supply their electrical power as part of their program to strive for true sustainability.

* There has been a rise in the quality of premium wines exported from Chile in South America. Pinot Noir was rarely produced in Chile ten years ago, but today there are a number of quality producers, many using American winemaking talent. The list includes Kingston Family Vineyards (Byron Kosuge and Evelyn Vidal), Matetic Vineyards (Ken Bernards), Casa Marin (Greg La Follette) and Cono Sur.

** Animals have become the winegrower’s best friend. The vine mealybug (VMB) feeds on the trunk, leaves and fruit of vines leaving a sticky, infectious waste product behind on the vine. In addition, the VMB is a vector for leaf roll virus. The pest is a problem in Carneros and the area south of St. Helena in Napa. Golden retriever dogs are now being trained to find the pests in vineyards. The VMB is but a tiny white speck and difficult to see with the human eye. Dogs can single out infested vines which can then be removed avoiding the spraying of whole vineyards. Sheep which are bred for their small stature are being used to mow, fertilize and weed vineyards efficiently. Notable wineries using sheep are Araujo, Beaulieu, Benziger, Domaine Chandon and Robert Mondavi. Mondavi alone employs 500 ewes. Sheep can be trained not to eat the grape leaves and do not like sour grapes. The Babydoll Southdown breed, which is less then 2 feet tall, shows the greatest promise for this vineyard work. Scottish Highland cows are also used to mow and fertilize vineyards. Chickens in traveling coops can be moved about the vineyard to eat cut worms and other pests as well as fertilize. Raptors and owls are a natural means of pest control and perches are often seen in vineyards now to attract these birds. These predators are voracious eaters of gophers, voles and rats. Bird houses in vineyards can welcome bluebirds which eat insects that carry Pierce’s disease. Bats consume large numbers of insects and judiciously placed bat houses in vineyards can be beneficial (and may scare off obnoxious wine geeks as well). And finally, lets not forget there ARE beneficial insects in the vineyard. “Insectory” cover crops and vegetable gardens attract welcome ladybugs, spiders, wasps and damsel bugs.

** The wine industry debate over closures is ongoing. Proponents of cork point out that cork is the greenest closure, with cork forests retaining 14 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year. Alternative closures require environmentally destructive manufacturing processes and are not recyclable. Paul White, writing in *Slow Food*, remarks, “It is no surprise that screw cap technology is being championed by the Australian industry, which arguably has been and continues to be environmentally anti-

terroir.” 50% of Australian wine and 90% of New Zealand wine is currently bottled under screw cap closures. Cork taint, secondary to the chemical TCA (2,4,6-trichloroanisole) and produced by fungi that grow in cork trees, has been reduced in recent years. Corticeire Amorium, the world’s largest maker of wine corks, has developed a process to steam out compounds caused by the naturally occurring fungus in cork and claims to have lowered the industry-wide cork taint incidence to less than 1%. Fans of cork also point out that cork tends to provide the right amount of oxygen to keep reduction problems that have plagued screw caps controlled. Randall Grahm, one of the strongest supporters of screw cap closures, has been plagued with reduction aromas in his concentrated red wines after bottling, finding that it takes these wines nearly two years to shed their funky metallic and closed fruit characters. Jamie Goode wrote a very succinct and informative article titled “Reductive Reasoning” in *Wines & Vines* (August, 2007). In the article, Goode explains that the explanation of screw cap reduction is much too complicated for most mortals, but basically has to do with post-bottling sulfur chemistry. (You can stop reading here). The screw cap shuts off all oxygen ingress and creates a “low-redox” environment that causes some undesirable sulfur chemical changes to occur producing sulfur compounds in a more “smelly and reduced form.” The result is offensive smells of rotten eggs or dirty drains (hydrogen sulfide), burned match, rubber, cooked cabbage (hydrogen sulfide oxidized to mercaptans), and garlic, rubber, onion, cabbage (from mercaptans oxidizing to disulfides). It is important to point out that the liners of screw caps are largely the culprit. The “tin/Sasan” screw cap which is used primarily in Australia and New Zealand is responsible for causing mercaptan odors in a little more than 2% of wines. The “saranex only” closure allows more oxygen to enter the bottle and is not implicated in screw cap reduction. United States wine sales of screw caps increased 25% in 2006. George Tabor, the noted author of *Judgment of Paris*, released an absorbing treatise this year on the wine closure debate titled, *To Cork or not to Cork, Tradition, Romance, Science, and the Battle for the Wine Bottle* (Scribner, \$26).



** The controversy over high alcohol wines continues and everyone has chimed in. Retailer Darrell Corti in Sacramento has publicly stated that he would not stock wines with more than 14.5% alcohol. Randy Dunn, longtime winemaker for Dunn Vineyards, is also adamantly opposed to high alcohol wines. In a letter to *Wines & Vines* (September, 2007), he said, “The current fad of higher and higher alcohol wines should stop... I don’t believe the average person is so insensitive to flavors and aromas that he must have a 15% Cabernet, Chardonnay or Pinot Noir to get the aromas and flavors. Influential members of the wine press have led the score-chasing winemakers/owners up the alcohol curve. These wines are made to taste and spit - not to drink,” Steve Heimoff, writing in the *Wine Enthusiast* (October, 2007) is in Dunn’s camp. He said, “California wines, both red and white,are overly sweet, high in alcohol and too oaky. They taste more like a Starbuck’s frappiccino than anything resembling actual table wine. It’s no exaggeration to say there’s a backlash out there against high alcohol, sweet wines.” James Laube takes a more tactful course. In the *Wine Spectator* (June 30, 2007), he noted, “If you taste a wine and it seems to be balanced, the alcohol content shouldn’t matter.” De-alcing and adding water to wines to reduce the alcohol is common practice in California now. The reasons are multiple, including a need to restart a stuck fermentation, to correct an out-of-balance wine, to avoid the increased taxation that comes with alcohol levels over 14%, or simply to arrive at the sweet spot where the alcohol level brings out the most desirable aromatic and flavor qualities in a wine. The two major technologies in California for removal of alcohol are Comp Tech’s spinning cone method and Vinovation, Inc’s reverse osmosis process.

Noteworthy Quotes From 2007

“Pinot Noir should be a princess, not a monster. Who would you rather eat with?”

David Lett, The Eyrie Vineyards, Oregon

“Pinot Noir is fast becoming boring, a victim of predictability and homogeneity. The new definition of ripeness has served to obscure site differences rather than emphasize them.”

Matt Kramer, *Wine Spectator*, June 30, 2007

“Now that Pinot is the ‘in’ Queen of Wines, the temptation to make it more ‘accessible’ - more flavor-familiar and user-friendly - is just too much for some wineries to resist. Already I’ve found some sadly simple, characterless examples of Pinot Noir. Some wineries are toning down their Pinot Noir’s uniqueness, so it will be a more ‘centrist’ wine for all tastes. A ‘class system’ of Pinot Noir lovers is developing and some may never get to know what the fuss and passion was all about.”

Von Hurson, *the Petaluma Post*, June, 2007

“Reviewers - please at least include the labeled alcohol percentage in all your reviews.”

Randy Dunn, Dunn Vineyards, Napa (Note: I have been doing this in the *PinotFile* for years and this remains a unique feature among the many wine publications in the world.)

“We might consider investing in southern England where the chalk soils are similar to those in Champagne. But we need to be convinced that global warming and the pattern of climate change is permanent.”

Jean-Claude Rouzaud, Louis Roederer, Champagne

“Varietal suitability has a window of only 2-3°C and the projections of temperature changes for wine regions around the world range from 1-7°C. Changes of these magnitudes have the potential to bring about large shifts in suitability.”

Gregory Jones, Professor, Southern Oregon University

“People think about global warming in the way they think about violence on television or the growing trade deficits, as a marginal concern to them, if a concern at all.”

Bill McKibben, author, *The End of Nature*

“There is an inconvenient truth in the wine business. For all the talk about green this, and green that, and for all the sustainable farming and recycling and composting, wineries are wreaking havoc on the planet with their oversize bottles. It’s bad enough that fat, heavy bottles don’t fit into wine racks. These bottles cost more and use more glass. When you ship them, because they are heavier, fewer cases fill a container. Because fewer cases can fit into a container, the cases are more costly to ship, use more gas and end up harming the environment.”

Jake Lorenzo, *Wine Business Monthly*, August, 2007

“Any hands-on winemaker who tells you that his wine is just a product is lying through his teeth... It’s a performance. You hear the applause, or you hear the deafening silence.”

Stephen Yafa, *Wines & Vines*, August, 2007.

“If you rate your “best” by price, you’re an investor, not a taster. You know the price of wines but not the value of them.”

Richard Elia, *Quarterly Review of Wines*, Summer, 2007

Wine is Good News for Health in 2007

There continues to be a plethora of research and epidemiological studies in the scientific literature supporting the health benefits of wine. The inconsistencies, conflicting findings, and the vagaries of human nature make definitive claims in medicine always difficult, and can, excuse the pun, drive you to drink. Barbara Cohn Ph.D., a researcher of breast cancer said, "It is essential for the public to have the chance to appreciate how difficult human research is. One study does not prove a finding - it is important to see whether what we find is consistent with lab studies and other things we can learn with human populations."

Most of this research has centered around the polyphenols in grapes, a group of chemicals known as phytoalexins or phytochemicals, naturally occurring compounds in many plants that have biological activity in the human body. The polyphenols are not unique to wine and occur in many other fruits and vegetables including raspberries, blueberries, plums, pomegranates, tea, olive oil, walnuts, peanuts, and chocolate/cocoa. There are more polyphenols in wine than in grape juice because the fermentation process extracts more of these phytochemicals. Red wine contains significantly more phenolic compounds (one glass = 200 mg) than white wine (one glass = 40 mg). The polyphenols can be further subdivided into tannins, lignins and flavonoids. The polyphenols most studied have been the lignins catechin and quercetin and the flavonoids resveratrol and procyanidin.

Wine has been shown to have a wide range of biological effects on many body systems, but the actions of beneficial wine compounds are complex and poorly understood at this time. The effects on the cardiovascular system alone are numerous including antioxidant actions (preventing oxidation of molecules such as LDL or low-density lipoprotein, the so-called "bad cholesterol"), suppressing endothelin-1, a substance produced by the lining of blood vessels that promotes atherosclerosis, direct effects such as increasing HDL or high-density lipoprotein, the "good cholesterol," which can reduce the risk of atherosclerosis, and anti-thrombotic or anti-coagulation effects that reduce the "stickiness" of platelets.

Why is it important to research the possible positive health effects of polyphenols and alcohol? The Milken Institute reports that the United States has 40 million cases of cancer, diabetes mellitus, heart disease, cerebrovascular accident, mental disorders and pulmonary disease costing 1.1 trillion dollars per year to treat. The Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University reports that Americans have much higher rates of serious disease including cancer, heart disease, diabetes mellitus, and hypertension in the over 50-year-old age group than comparably aged Europeans. Heart disease is diagnosed nearly twice as frequently in Americans than their European counterparts, arthritis and cancer more than twice as often.

The American Heart Association under their 2006 Diet Recommendations include vegetables and fruits, whole-grain foods, fish, lean meats, low-fat dairy products, limited saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol, avoidance of beverages with added sugars, minimal salt intake, no smoking and drinking alcohol in moderation (one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men). This message has been largely ignored. According to *Gourmet* (July, 2007), **one-fifth of Americans live on a diet of 10 foods or less. The most common choices: French fries, fried chicken, chocolate chip cookies and Kraft macaroni and cheese!**

In the following pages, I have summarized the most pertinent world's literature published in 2007 on wine and health. Keep in mind that the definition of levels of drinking vary, but in general moderate drinking is defined as no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men. Heavy drinking exceeds these daily limits. A standard alcoholic drink is a 12 oz beer, 5 oz of wine, or 1.5 oz of 80 proof spirits or liquor.

Longevity

Wine drinkers live longer than beer and spirit drinkers in a 29-year Finnish study. Findings showed a 34% lower death rate in men who were moderate wine drinkers compared to beer and spirit drinkers and wine drinkers had better overall mental and physical health. *Journal of Gerontology*, 2/07.

Moderate wine drinkers live longer than nondrinkers in an Italian review of 35 independent studies involving more than 1 million subjects. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 12/06.

Dutch researchers reported that light alcohol intake long-term in middle-aged men was associated with less cardiovascular and all-cause death and longer life expectancy at age 50. Those who drank 1-2 drinks per day had a 36% lower risk of all-cause death and a 34% lower risk of cardiovascular-related death. On average, light and moderate drinkers of any type of alcohol lived 16 years longer than teetotalers. Wine drinkers lived the longest of all drinkers, on average an additional 3.8 years longer. *American Heart Association 47th Annual Conference on Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology & Prevention*.

Cognitive (Brain)

Grape polyphenols (in both Cabernet red wine and Concord grape juice) were shown to counteract beta-amyloid plaques in the brain in an experimental mouse model of Alzheimer's Disease. In Alzheimer's Disease there is an accumulation of beta-amyloid plaques in the brain identifiable on imaging examinations. *From the Center for Research in Alternative & Complimentary Medicine in Alzheimer's Disease at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and reported at Neuroscience 2007 in San Diego, California*.

Patients with Alzheimer's Disease live an average 4 years longer when they eat a Mediterranean diet (which includes the moderate intake of wine). The Mediterranean diet also lowers the risk of developing Alzheimer's Disease. *Neurology*, 09/07.

One drink of alcohol (mostly wine) a day can delay dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease in those people beginning to show memory problems (mild cognitive impairment). An 85% slower rate of dementia was reported in the study. It was theorized that alcohol might act by improving circulation in the brain. *Neurology*, 05/22/07.

Italian and British researchers found that drinking French Champagne may prevent brain injuries from strokes and other neurological disease. *Journal of Agriculture & Food Chemistry*, 04/18/07.

A Portuguese study found that moderate consumption of red wine may prevent brain damage caused by alcohol. The study was performed in rats but the findings are likely to apply to humans. *Neuroscience*, 06/08/07.

Moderate amounts of alcohol (a 2½ % ethanol diet which is less than the legal driving limit of 1-2 drinks per day in humans) administered to rats led to improved memory compared to rats who received no alcohol in their diet. The rats on a heavy alcohol diet did poorly on tasks requiring object recognition, but did better on emotional memory tasks. The authors of the study hypothesize that people who drink to "drown their sorrows" may actually promote traumatic memories and lead them to further drinking leading to alcoholism. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 09/07.

Cardiovascular

Men with high blood pressure are 30% less likely to have a heart attack if they drink 1-2 glasses of wine a day. Light drinkers had about the same rate of heart attack as nondrinkers. Research was done at the Harvard School of Public Health. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 01/02/07. (Note: those with high blood pressure can drink moderately as long as they are on anti-hypertension medication).

An Australian study showed that regular intake of red wine (a little more than ½ a bottle of Cabernet daily) by subjects of all ages lowered cholesterol levels and decreased oxidative stress on their blood vessels as measured by blood testing. *Nutrition Journal* 09/24/2007.

The United States Institute on Ageing at the University of Florida reported a study showing that men and women, ages 70-79, who drank 1-7 alcoholic drinks a week had significantly lower risk of heart problems and death compared to abstainers. With light to moderate alcohol consumption, there was a 260% decreased risk of all-cause mortality and a 30% decreased risk of cardiac events such as myocardial infarction compared to non-drinkers. *Archives Internal Medicine* 04/07.

Red wine, apples and pears decreased the risk of heart-related mortality in postmenopausal women. *Iowa Women's Health Study by the University of Minnesota*.

Both young and older people who drank ½ bottle of red wine a day showed increased HDL cholesterol levels and increased antioxidant levels (harmful free radical levels were reduced). The changes could be observed in as little as two weeks after regular wine intake. *Nutrition Journal* 09/24/07.

Cardiovascular researchers suggest the need for a large prospective randomized trial on the health benefits of wine. After reviewing the literature, the researchers concluded that the preponderance of data suggests 1-2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women benefits the cardiovascular system. *Circulation*, 09/07.

Moderate consumption of Spanish sparkling wine (cava) decreases levels of substances (inflammatory markers) that cause buildup of arterial plaques. The sparkling wine had more anti-inflammatory effect than gin which was studied for comparison. *Journal of Nutrition* 10/07.

Chinese men who consumed moderate amounts of alcohol were at about the same risk of stroke as nondrinkers, while light drinkers (up to 6 drinks a week) showed an 8% lower chance of stroke. Heavy drinkers were at a much higher risk for stroke. Wine may provide added protection in moderate drinkers, but the study did not measure this as most of the men preferred liquor or beer. *Annals of Neurology*, 08/20/07.

Cancer

Men, ages 40-64, who drink 4-7 glasses of red wine a week are only 52% as likely to develop prostate cancer as those who abstain. Red wine showed more benefit than white wine. The researchers theorized that antioxidants in red wine may counterbalance androgens (male hormones) that stimulate the prostate. *Harvard Men's Health Watch*, 06/07.

Laboratory mice fed resveratrol had less tumors of the prostate compared to mice fed a normal diet. The lead author of this study, Coral Lamartiniere, has a family history of prostate cancer and he drinks a glass of Cabernet nightly and takes resveratrol supplements every day. *Journal of Carcinogenesis*, 09/07.

Dr. Arthur Klatsky, a noted researcher on wine and health, reported to the *European Cancer Conference in Barcelona, Spain* on 09/27/07 that females who consume 1-2 drinks per day increase their risk of breast cancer by 10% compared to those who drank less than 1 drink per day. The risk was increased to 30% if women drank more than 3 drinks per day - comparable to the risk of taking estrogen or smoking one pack of cigarettes a day. Eating high amounts of folic acid (leafy greens, citrus fruits, beans and peas) may eliminate any risk of breast cancer due to moderate alcohol consumption.

Researchers compiled 10 studies that excluded smokers. They found that wine drinkers have a lower risk of lung cancer compared to abstainers regardless of the level of wine consumption. There was a lower risk with wine than with other types of alcohol. The findings were only statistically significant in men. *Cancer Epidemiological Markers & Prevention*, 11/07.

Gastrointestinal

Italian researchers at the University of Pavia have found that both red and white wine act as antimicrobial agents reducing the population of streptococci bacteria in the mouth. Streptococci cause tooth decay and sore throats. They postulated that the organic acids which occur naturally in wine and which are also produced as a byproduct of malolactic fermentation are the most effective killers of the bacteria. The study supports the idea that wine can help prevent tooth decay, gum disease and sore throats. *Journal of Agriculture & Food Chemistry*, 07/11/07.

A laboratory study showed that Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Shiraz kill harmful bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract, but not the beneficial strains that aid digestion. The research exonerates wine as a cause of heartburn and gastric reflux (both of which are known side-effects of alcohol). *Archives of Internal Medicine*

Bones

Low and consistent doses of alcohol in laboratory mice slowed the onset of rheumatoid arthritis. *Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences* 01/02/07.

Diabetes Mellitus

Resveratrol may counter type 2 (adult-onset) diabetes mellitus and insulin resistance according to a Chinese report. When the body becomes less sensitive to insulin, a hormone that controls blood sugar, type 2 diabetes mellitus may result. The study showed that resveratrol blocks insulin resistance in mice. The mechanism is presumably due to activation of the gene SIRT1 which boosts insulin sensitivity. A person would need to drink 3L of red wine each day to get the 15 mg necessary for resveratrol's beneficial effects. *Cell Metabolism*, 10/07.

Pregnancy

Wine labels in the United States warn against any alcohol during pregnancy and most doctors discourage drinking wine throughout pregnancy. There have been over 5,000 articles published on the effects of alcohol during pregnancy and the last word is still not in. However, there is enough evidence for various adverse alcohol-related birth defects that most clinicians recommend abstinence to patients contemplating pregnancy or already pregnant. The issue is currently quite controversial in the United Kingdom with conflicting guidance from different sources. The British Medical Association and the Government Department of Health suggest those pregnant and those trying to get pregnant abstain from drinking alcohol (they had previously stated that one to two drinks once or twice a week was acceptable). In contrast, the Royal College of Obstetrics & Gynecology has publicly said that moderate drinking in pregnancy is safe. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has said it is safe for women to have less than one drink of alcohol a day after the first trimester of pregnancy.

Resveratrol

Most of the scientific research on wine polyphenols has focused on the so-called "miracle molecule," resveratrol. The preponderance of research has been on mice and in vitro (outside the living organism). Some of the beneficial effects of resveratrol have been shown to include protection against cancer, heart disease and diabetes mellitus. Resveratrol has been demonstrated to lower cholesterol, reduce inflammation, decrease pain, prevent hearing loss, and increase the life expectancy of fruit flies, earthworms, mice and strains of yeast in the lab. A study reported in *Nature* in 2006 by Harvard Medical School and the National Institute of Aging involving obese mice fed high-fat, high-calorie diets found that they



lived a normal life span if they took large doses of resveratrol. They outlived over-indulgers who took no resveratrol. The researchers postulated that resveratrol works by activating the SIRT1 gene. It is theorized that resveratrol interacts in a cell with SIRT1 activating it. New mitochondria (the powerhouse of cells) are formed in muscles and other tissues boosting the body's metabolic rate, which may in turn mimic the slow-aging effects of a calorie-restriction diet.

In one study, humans were given resveratrol caplets and then their blood was analyzed to see how much of it became absorbed. At the highest dose, unchanged resveratrol levels were found to be about half as high as the level previously shown to have cancer-preventing effects in vitro. But resveratrol metabolites were present in high levels and may have similar effects as resveratrol itself. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, 06/07.

University of California Irvine researchers had colon cancer patients take resveratrol for two weeks between diagnosis and surgery and then compared diagnostic biopsies with tissue excised at surgery. They found a 50% inhibition of cell changes with more inhibition in healthy tissue than cancerous tissue. This suggests that resveratrol may be of value in preventing colon cancer. *American Association for Cancer Research*, 04/07.

Resveratrol was shown to decrease the risk of deadly prostate tumors in mice. *Carcinogenesis*, 08/07.

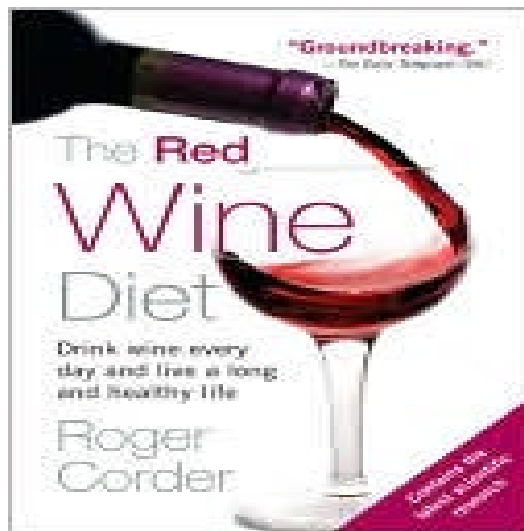
Resveratrol taken along with statin drugs works better than either alone in reducing lipid levels in rats with high cholesterol and improving their recovery time after heart attacks. *Journal Molecular & Cellular Cardiology*

With all of the hype surrounding resveratrol, there are a number of supplements available on the market. The safety of these have not been established as they have not been thoroughly tested in humans, but they are probably safe if used in moderate doses. Karen Raun, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* (October 8, 2007) related a testimonial from several doctors about resveratrol including this one. Dr. Nilanjana Maulik, Professor of Surgery at the University of Connecticut said, "I take resveratrol every day, 750 mg, which is equivalent to 100 glasses of red wine. Why I take that is a real secret. Ok, I will let you know. I am 45 years old, but I look like 34. I can work round the clock 24/7. I do extensive brain work, but I am always cheerful and I am never tired. So the bottom line is, I have a lot of energy, and that is from resveratrol I am sure."

Many researchers feel that only a small daily amount of resveratrol is necessary to produce many of its myriad of beneficial effects in the human body. Those in agreement feel it makes more sense to drink red wine in which resveratrol occurs naturally than to consume resveratrol supplements. A group of British scientists wrote in the respected medical journal, *Lancet*, "If wine is ever found to contain a constituent protective against cardiovascular disease, then we consider it almost a sacrilege that this constituent be isolated. The medicine is already in a highly palatable form." Leroy Creasy at Cornell University studied the concentration of resveratrol in over 100 American wines. He found that Oregon's Willamette Valley Vineyards Pinot Noir had more than 4 times the level of California red wines. The American Muscadine grapes, notably Scuppernong, which are native to the coastal Southwest United States, have more antioxidants than other grape varieties. The largest producer in the world of Muscadine wines is Duplin Winery in Rose Hill, North Carolina.

Two noted researchers, Roger Corder, a professor of experimental therapeutics at William Harvey Research Institute in London and his colleague Alan Crozier of the University of Glasgow feel that procyanidins not resveratrol are responsible for the health benefits of red wine. They postulate that the amount of resveratrol necessary to produce health benefits is too small in the quantity of wine normally consumed. They point out that one would need to drink several hundred liters a day to get the benefits. The amount of procyanidins in a half bottle of wine on the other hand, is all you need for the same effect. Resveratrol is available at one one-hundredth or one one-thousandth of the levels of

procyanidin. Crozier and Corder's research was reported in *Nature* (11/28/07) and Corder has written a book titled *The Red Wine Diet* (Avery/Penguin Group, \$15.95). In the book Corder reviews studies of long-lived men in the Gers region of France and in Sardinia where the local wines have the highest procyanidin levels. The inky and tannic wines drunk in these areas are made from Tannat, Malbec, Sangiovese, Anglianico, Sargantino and Nebbiolo grapes which are very high in polyphenols, possessing as much as four times more procyanidin than other wines. His book discusses his research and provides a recommended diet of procyanidin-rich foods and drinks. He urges moderation and recommends 2 small glasses of red wine per day (preferably American Cabernet Sauvignon or Cabernet blends) for women and up to 3 glasses a day for men. Each glass of tannic red wine contains 60-90 mg of procyanidin and Corder recommends 300-500 mg daily from various sources including apples, berries, pomegranates, persimmons, walnuts, and chocolate. The only grape juice that has decent levels of procyanidin is Concord. The exact mechanisms by which procyanidin produces its effects in the human body are unknown and future clinical trials are planned. However you view the health claims for procyanidin, it is hard to argue against a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and a modicum of red wine.



The whole key to drinking wine for health is moderation. We know that overdrinking can lead to a number of health problems including sudden death from high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke, cardiac myopathy, cirrhosis of the liver, acute alcoholic hepatitis, osteoporosis, chronic gastritis, irritable bowel syndrome, hallucinations, tremors, insomnia, nightmares and night sweats, dementia (Korsakoff's Syndrome), and cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, stomach, liver, colon and breast. Meir Stampfer, Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology at Harvard School of Public Health has noted, "It is better not to drink at all than to drink too much."

Long before the French Paradox was popularized in the United States, Raymond Pearl, M.D., wrote a book in 1926 that was the bane of prohibitionists, titled *Alcohol and Longevity*. In the book, his studies led him to conclude that moderate drinking of alcohol led to lower rates of mortality and greater expectations of life compared to abstention from drinking. Even the great sage, Johnny Carson, knew the benefits of wine. After undergoing quadruple bypass surgery, he offered the following advice to David Letterman who was recovering from quintuple bypass surgery, "Drink more red wine."

By The Numbers

The demand for premium Pinot Noir has driven Sonoma vineyard prices over \$100,000/acre. Napa vineyard prices are in the \$200,00-300,000/acre range. Vineyards in Pomerol go for \$1,000,000/acre and in the Cote d'Or vineyards are priced at \$350,000 and up/acre.

Pinot Noir retail sales in the United States have increased 24.4% for the 52-week period ending September 22, 2007. New Zealand sales increased 34.1%, French wine increased 2.8%, and Cabernet Sauvignon increased 12.7%. (Nielsen Scantrack data)

The average restaurant price for Pinot Noir increased from \$45 in 1995 to \$70 in 2006.

There are 365 clones of Pinot Noir in Burgundy - some Pinot Droit as well as Pinot Fin.

90% of California wineries produce less than 10,000 cases of wine per year and most vinify less than 5,000 cases per year.

California now has 4,600 growers, 522,000 vineyard acres in 47 of 58 counties, and 107 appellations. California is the 4th largest wine producer in the world. There are more than 2,000 wine brands in California. California added 465 new wineries (up 28%) in 2006.

17,680 tons of Pinot Noir were harvested in Oregon in 2006, 8,134 of which came from Yamhill County. 200 of Oregon's 364 wineries are in Yamhill County. Oregon wine sales have almost tripled in the years from 2000 to 2006.

E&J Gallo is the top United States wine company producing 62 million cases/year.

Bronco Wine Co, founded in 1973 by Fred Franzia (below), now produces 20 million cases/year, 6 million of which are Two Buck Chuck. Much of the production is sold in bulk. Bronco controls 30,000 acres of vineyards in California and invests \$20-50 million each year in facility upgrades.



75% of United States wine drinkers purchase wine in the \$6-\$10 and \$10-15 range. Two-thirds drink the wine within a week, and one-third drink it within 48 hours.

There are 5,970 wineries in the United States as of November, 2006, with at least one in every state. California is number one with 2,923 wineries, Washington is second at 507, followed by Oregon with 364, New York with 270 and Texas with 151.

The *PinotFile* website now receives on average about 100,000 visitors a month and reaches out worldwide with visitors from Canada, Austria, Germany, Norway, Great Britain, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Sweden, Hong Kong, France, Ireland, Brazil, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand among many others.

The Run at Copeland Creek Ends

Don Baumhefner is a long-time veteran of Sonoma County winemaking who spent a number of years with Joe Swan at his eponymous winery in the heart of the Russian River Valley (refer to past issues of the *PinotFile* for further details about Don's friendship and experiences working along side Joe Swan). Don made his first barrel of wine 30 years ago in his family's barn. He was an innovator, starting several wine bars in the San Francisco Bay area back in the 1980s when the concept was brand new. In 1980, he established the wine program at the new Santa Rosa restaurant, John Ash & Co. Here he worked as a sommelier and pioneered the practice of offering fine wines by the glass. In 1992, he directed the Sonoma Mountain planting of the first Pfendler Ranch Vineyard to Bordeaux varietals. Shortly thereafter, he supervised the planting of a 6-acre Pinot Noir vineyard along the lower slopes of Sonoma Mountain near Copeland Creek. The vineyard was planted to Swan (no surprise!) and Dijon 114, 115, 777 and 838 clones and benefits from a long growing season in the Sonoma Coast appellation.

The vineyards were owned by Peter Pfendler, but Don was the vineyard manager, winemaker and sales manager for Pfendler Vineyards. The name was eventually change to Copeland Creek and Don released a series of outstanding Pinot Noirs, several of which made the *PinotFile* North American All-American list. Tragically, Peter Pfendler passed away in 2007 and his widow decided to take the winery in a new direction with a new name and new winemaker, Greg Bjornstad. Don subsequently became the winemaker at Ridgeway Vineyards in Petaluma.

The Copeland Creek style of Pinot Noir was one of finesse, balance and easy approachability. It has been a wine of moderate alcohol, usually about 13.4%, that has an affinity for food. Don has developed a theory about the "sweet spot" for alcohol in wines. His idea is that each vineyard has its own alcohol level or sweet spot at which the wine presents its optimum flavor profile. Don has been doing experiments for years with alcohol levels in wines. Using the same wine, say his Pinot Noir, he makes several samples differing only in 0.1% alcohol level (for example, 13.2% through 13.9%). He then asks tasters representing a cross-section of wine expertise which wine they prefer. Every time the consensus has been almost exactly the same - 13.4%. He has done this for several vintages and the preferred level of alcohol came out the same each year. Don is convinced that higher alcohol wines mask many of Pinot Noir's delicate flavors, obscuring the terroir from which the grapes originate.

Don now has available the last Copeland Creek Vineyards Pinot Noir from the 2005 vintage.

2005 Copeland Creek Vineyards Pinot Noir 13.45% alc., 991 cases, \$30 (\$25 by the case). The wine was aged in 33% new oak and has now spent about 8 months in bottle. The 2001, 2003 and 2005 (alternate years) of this wine produced more color and fruit concentration. *Light in color, this wine shows nice penetrating aromas of the Holy Trinity of Pinot Noir - red fruits, oak and spice. Light in weight and silky in texture, with plenty of finesse, this Pinot exhibits lovely red cherry flavors enhanced by a hint of spice. No fancy heavy bottle or cutesy cork - just good Pinot at a fair price.*

To order the wine, contact Don directly at 707-778-7143 or e-mail him at donbaumhefner@hotmail.com



Pinot Briefs

Going to the Seed In the last issue of the *PinotFile*, I discussed the intentions of Randall Grahm to plant his new Pinot Noir vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains from seed rather than nursery vine stock or vine cuttings. A fellow wine enthusiast, Mark Ryan, alerted me to an interesting article he read in Alice Feiring's blog (www.alicefeiring.com) that appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* September 21, 2007. Feiring's article was on "out-of-the-way" bargains in Burgundy. One of the featured wineries was Sylvain Pataille from one of Burgundy's lesser appellations - Marsannay. Apparently the little-known (except to burgphiles) Pataille was a consultant for domains such as Roumier and Groffier before launching his own winery in 2001. In one of his vineyards he planted from seed instead of cuttings or clones and he farms organically and biodynamically. Apparently he is on track, for noted British wine expert Clive Coates once wrote that "Marsannay is not a serious wine," but recently corrected himself, "I wrote that before the arrival of Sylvain Pataille, whose wines rather contradict my point." Pataille's 2005 Marsannay is available from Burgundy Wine Company in New York. The website is www.burgundywinecompany.com.

Wine Lovers Meet It was only a matter of time before a dating site showed up on the internet for people who share the love of wine. At www.wineloversmeet.com, a free dating site, people with a common interest in wine can meet. The site touts the fact that those who delight in wine "are among the most classy and sophisticated individuals within our society." I am not sure about that claim.

Cloudy Bay Pinot Tasting The annual Pinot at Cloudy Bay tasting was held June 30, 2007 and focused on the 2004 vintage. 137 wines from Burgundy, Oregon, Napa, Sonoma, Tasmania, Mornington Peninsula, and New Zealand were included. All wines were tasted blind. The French did not fare well in the tasting and blame was directed at the less than stellar 2004 vintage. Geoff Kelly, a New Zealand wine correspondent and educator, attended the event (his full report is available at www.geoffkellywinereviews.co.nz). He raved about the New Zealand Pinot Noirs, saying "Plaudits go to the Kiwis. The best were not only vividly varietal, but interestingly Burgundian (in style) as well." Remember, he is a Kiwi. Geoff Kelly's top wine was a **2004 Littorai Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**. This particular wine made my First Team on the 2007 North America All-American Pinot Noirs list (*PinotFile*, Volume 6, Issue 49). Other favorites included Pegasus Bay and Mt Difficulty Pipe Clay Terrace from New Zealand, Domaine Fourrier Gevrey-Chambertin Les Champeux VV from Burgundy, and then two more Kiwis, Craggy Range Te Muna Road and Cloudy Bay.

Wine Societies Wine Societies was founded in 2006 as a new online marketplace for wine lovers. The site enables private collectors and enthusiasts to monetize their personal collections by selling or auctioning vintage wines to wine retailers and wholesalers and simultaneously setting prices and informing the market. Licensed wineries, retailers and wholesalers can have increased access to the private collections of wine connoisseurs, wineries are able to sell reserve and specialty wines to wholesalers, and retailers can have increased access to wholesalers. Wine Societies has no subscription fees, membership terms or contracts and joining is free with no obligation. To view the site go to www.winesocieties.com. There are very few wines for sale or auction at present.

China Thirsts for Wine According to the *Shanghai Daily*, 90% of the wine drunk in China is local plonk but as the economy rockets ahead and consumer spending power increases, wine lovers are spending more on luxury wine. ASC Fine Wines in China is now the largest importer in the world of Chateau Latour. In December, 2007, ASC opened The Wine Residence, a beautiful villa close to the People's Square for members to cellar their fine wines underground. Besides facilities for private tastings and social functions, the building houses a gourmet restaurant, the Napa Wine Bar and Kitchen.



PrinceofPinot.com

Look for a giant upcoming Oregon
Pinot Noir Issue

End of Year Issue

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Kistler has just released two Sonoma Coast Pinot Noirs to mailing list customers, the 2005 Kistler Occidental Station Cuvée Catherine Pinot Noir (\$90) and the 2005 Kistler Bodega Headlands Cuvée Elizabeth Pinot Noir (\$120). Total production is only 1250 cases. The Bodega Headlands bottling was awarded a score of 99 by Robert Parker, Jr., and I am sure the wine will show up on auction sites for well over \$300 a bottle. Is it worth it? Well, the 2004 Kistler Bodega Headlands Cuvée Elizabeth received a score of 94/95 from Parker, while the burghound Alan Meadows gave the same wine a score of 86, sighting the lack of texture “that is anything but elegant.” Here is a perfect example of the fact that scores are the patrimony of the beholder and can vary wildly between tasters. If you are hung up on scores, pick your wine guru and go with it. If you are comfortable with your own palate, read with interest and then move on, perhaps exploring the many delightful Pinot Noirs that are available for ¼ the price.

The Long and Winding Pinot Road, Part II

1970 was a great year for me. I was living humbly in a studio apartment close to the hospital where I was interning. My girlfriend was a flight attendant (they called them stewardesses back then) for TWA. I was working my tail off, but when our busy schedules allowed, I would pick her up at Los Angeles International Airport after a long flight. We would stop at the market and buy some food as well as a jug of Spanada. Spanada was one of a long line of wines blended with fruit introduced by Gallo. It was the original Spanish sounding wine. Spanada was first introduced in 1970 at a time when the country was changing tastes from dessert to table wines. We spent many marvelous evenings together at a tiny two-seat kitchen table, eating simply and drinking Spanada. The Spanada inevitably led to romance and I thanked Gallo many times for that.

That same year I traveled to Northern California to visit some friends, including a doctor who collected wine. He actually had a cellar in his home stocked with fine Bordeaux and Burgundy. I had never seen anything like it in my life. He could tell I was awestruck and generously gave me a bottle of Burgundy (I spelled it Burgandy at the time) to take home.

One night my girlfriend and I decided to skip the Spanada and open the Burgundy. I did not have a corkscrew and had to borrow one from a neighbor. Needless to say, it was like no wine that had ever passed across my lips. The label was strange and foreign, and I remember the words Cote de Nuits, but regretfully, not any other details. It was seductive, delicate, beguiling, alluring, complex and aromatic. It was an epiphany. We polished off that bottle in no time and so began my love affair with Pinot Noir. I kept that empty bottle on my kitchen table until I moved out after internship without a remembrance of the exact producer, vintage or vineyard. I was beginning a residency in ophthalmology that offered an increase in salary and the prospects for further wine indulgences were dancing through my head. My girlfriend and I parted ways, but I discovered the wonders of well-stocked liquor stores and began to look for that elusive bottle of Burgandy. To be continued... ..