



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Who Dat Say
Dey Don't Love
Pinot Noir?

2009 Pinot Noir All-Americans

An annual tradition in the *PinotFile* is to name the best Pinot Noir performers "All-Americans." I am proud to present the best wines out of the over 2,000 American Pinot Noirs I formally sampled over the past year. Currently there is such a high level of quality in Pinot Noir from California and Oregon that it is difficult to single out wines that stand out from the pack. It is a testimony to the cadre of passionate winegrowers and winemakers who have scoffed at the suggestion that Pinot Noir is a "heartbreak grape," and have successfully corralled the grape's temperamental nature. The 2009 All-Americans were chosen in the spirit of celebration of the copious bounty of Pinot Noir that we are now blessed with in this country. The All-Americans were selected as much for their fruity, flirty New World hedonism as for their description-defying sensuality. All the chosen wines were technically complete, but more significantly, they displayed a powerful charisma. It is a truth that I have come to realize that it is not what is written about a wine, but what is emoted that truly defines a wine's greatness. Veronique Drouhin-Boss, winemaker at Oregon's Domaine Drouhin, echoed my sentiments perfectly when she said, "There are plenty of good wines in the world that give you pleasure. A great wine gives you emotion."

The stylistic split of power versus finesse, or "New World versus "Old World" styles, is ever present, but the superiority of either style is a tired argument. Most New World winemakers admit that they are trying to craft the best wine they can from their vineyards and not trying to imitate Old World Burgundy. The growing conditions in the New World provide more upfront fruitiness, extraction and higher alcohols. The French rarely concern themselves with heat at harvest and French Burgundy is frequently lighter, less fruity, higher in acid and lower in alcohol, more see-through red lingerie than Jimi Hendrix purple. Most New World Pinot Noirs strike a balance between the two extremes. True pinotphiles can appreciate both styles and relish in the diversity of Pinot Noir. I try to steer a neutral course, separating my personal preferences from objective assessment of the wine regardless of style.

The issue of high alcohols continues to be hotly (sic) debated. Although it has been written that there is an inclination toward picking earlier to avoid high alcohols, I cannot say, with exceptions, that this is a well-established trend among producers. Many wineries find there is a large group of consumers who prefer the sweetness and body that alcohol confers on wines. From a personal viewpoint, I can say that I definitely prefer wines in the 13.8% to 14.5% alcohol range since the wines are often more balanced, you can drink two or three glasses without getting sideways, and the health benefits from taking in moderate amounts of alcohol are realized.

I should reiterate the steps I take to arrive at the wines I recommend in the *PinotFile* during the year. I do not taste the wines blind, but strive for integrity, consistency and objectivity. "The aim of judgment," respected French wine critic Michael Bettane said, "is truth and impartiality." There are two main reasons for not tasting blind. First, I prefer to evaluate wines in the same manner that the consumer experiences them. Second, an essential part of evaluating wine is to know what you are drinking. I tend to focus on the drinkability at the time of sampling, since most consumers drink their wines young. I most appreciate wines that are at or close to their best the day I taste them. That said, credence is giving to age ability particularly in the context of balance. If a wine is balanced when I taste it young, it is almost certainly to hold up for several years. A wine that is out of balance initially will never become balanced over time.

I taste Pinot Noir daily in a consistently calm setting in my home in the late morning. The wines are sampled at cellar temperature (55° to 65°) initially and are tasted over a couple of hours in a relaxed atmosphere. I give the wines adequate time to open up and make several passes as I taste each wine. Occasionally I decant a wine if this will benefit the evaluation. I use either Riedel Vinum Burgundy or Riedel Oregon Pinot Noir glasses.

Often, I will taste wines later the same day or the next day from an opened and re-corked bottle. This helps to predict longevity. Frequently, the wines are re-tasted with food at lunch or dinner to replicate the consumer's drinking experience.

I have no monetary arrangement with any grower, winery, retailer or wholesaler and accept no advertising. I do accept wines for review, but at least half of the wines I sample are bought directly from the winery or through customary retail channels. There are many Pinot Noirs I sample casually at wineries, social dinners, Pinot Noir festivals, and wine dinners, but I do not include these in the All-American selection process, preferring to only incorporate bottled wines that are formally tasted in controlled circumstances and thereby comparable.

I do not award scores to wines, preferring to give an unpretentious and concise description of the style and quality of the wine that the reader can appreciate and use. I attempt to convey that special sensuality exhibited by Pinot Noir that is so easy to covet, yet so difficult to describe. I am convinced that an apropos description is not only more challenging to arrive at, but is the fairest way to evaluate a wine. The Pinot Geek icon (left) is used to designate wines of exceptional merit and the Value icon is used to indicate wines of good quality that are value priced (usually less than \$30).



I want to emphasize that I do not take my reviews or myself too seriously. I always keep under my wing the tenant written by noted New Zealand winemaker Neil McCallum, namely, "The difficult art of wine tasting requires a considerable measure of humility." I preach to the reader to use my tasting notes as a guide, but trust his or her own palate. Focus more on the producer than any one specific wine. I do want to emphasize my spouse's occasional tasting contributions. I think this is valuable, as women have incredibly good palates, and my wife, Patti, does not give a hoot about the label or the producer, only how the Pinot Noir tastes.



Beyond the emotions that a wine can incite and weigh heavily on its enjoyment, there are certain technical aspects to wine that must be addressed to arrive at a judgment of quality. A quality wine is spoken reverently

as a “complete” wine. All the components of a complete wine are joined harmoniously. A complete wine is an accolade that is awarded to wines with the following attributes. All the All-American wines, particularly the First Team, are complete wines.

Color: The color of a wine is evaluated according to hue, intensity and clarity. Pinot Noir is found in practically all shades of red and its color is due in large part initially to anthocyanin in the wine in association with acidity. Higher acidity gives a lively red color to a new wine while lower acidity produces a less brilliant and more purple hue. As wine ages in the bottle, tannins become an important determinant of color, combining with anthocyanin to bestow a brick or brown shade to the red color. The intensity of color of Pinot Noir is not related to quality in the sense that darker-colored wines do not necessarily provide more drinking enjoyment. Most small production Pinot Noirs are unfinned and unfiltered to retain all the aromatic and flavor components of the wine. Some sediment may result, but this is not a flaw in the wine.

Smell: A complete wine will have more than one family of aromas (fruity, floral, forest floor, spice, and more) present. The olfactory system enables the brain to perceive not only odors inhaled through the nostrils, but also the aromatic qualities of a wine conveyed to it from the palate by way of the nasal passage at the back of the mouth. Primary aromas are odors intrinsic to the grape. Secondary aromas are derived from alcohol fermentation and maturing in wood. Tertiary aromas are known as “bottle bouquet,” and develop from aging through recombination of esters and alcohols after alcoholic and malolactic fermentation are complete. A young wine may be slightly reductive when first opened and smell of burnt electrical cord or eraser. This is often a sign that a wine will age.

Taste: A complete wine will have more than one family of flavors and all the flavors will be complementary. Tastes are sensed on the tongue and each flavor remains evident for a time that determines persistence. The “attack” is the first sensation you experience as the wine enters your mouth. When tasting a wine, you have in order, the attack, the so-called “mid-palate,” the finish, and then the aftertaste, if any.

Texture: This is the tactile sense of wine in the mouth, on the tongue and in the throat. Often referred to as mouth feel, unctuousness or roundness (the French use the word *moelleux*), this is the fabric of a wine. Quality wines are often described as smooth, silky, velvety, well-knit, glossy, or polished, while lesser ones are deemed flabby, loose-knit, granular or coarse. Silky textures are unique to Pinot Noir and give the wine its sexiness.

Finish: This is the final aromatic and taste sensations of wine on the palate. The aromatic finish refers to the persistence of the wine (that is, how long the aromas last on the palate once you spit out or swallow the wine, measured in seconds). A quality wine is described as having “length” when the clean, balanced and full aromas linger on the finish. The gustative finish refers to which of the tastes (fruit, acid, tannin, alcohol, or roundness) leaves the most lasting impression on your palate. A complete wine will have both a long aromatic finish lasting several seconds and an appealing taste (fruit, acidity, astringency) at the end.

Aftertaste: This term is often incorrectly used synonymously with finish. For clarity’s sake, aftertaste is always a defect in wine and a complete wine has no aftertaste. Flaws in wine may be perceived in the aftertaste that otherwise might have been overlooked. The most common complaint is a bitter or astringent aftertaste, heightened by the fact that bitterness, sensed mainly at the back of the tongue, also has the longest flavor persistence. Aftertaste is the final indicator of a wine’s overall quality, confirming not only if it is balanced and complete, but whether it rates such adjectives as elegance, breeding and finesse.

Balance: This term is used synonymously with harmony and refers to the relative levels of fruit, acidity, alcohol, tannin and roundness that are experienced in the mouth. A well-balanced wine has all of these elements in equal amounts with no element predominating. Aromas have nothing to do with balance. A complete wine will have impeccable balance.

The All-American awards are unique in that the winners include trophy and cult Pinot Noirs that are infrequently, if ever, submitted for review to tasting panels of major wine publications. The PinotFile All-Americans encompass every Pinot Noir produced in California and Oregon and include wines enjoyed in 2009 from the 2006, 2007 and 2008 vintages. In 2009, All-Americans turned up in all the major Pinot Noir producing regions of California and Oregon.

The All-Americans are judged on merit, independent of price, style, and region of origin. I drink a fair amount of red Burgundy, but leave the critical evaluation of these wines to others who are more dedicated to that region.

You cannot live on red wine alone (debatable), so I also taste and indulge in Chardonnay, Pinot Noir's cool climate brethren. I have included the 2009 Chardonnay All-Americans in this issue for the first time.

The awarded wines are listed in alphabetical order. Most of the wines are still available from the winery or through retail distribution. A few of the wines are highly allocated, sold out, and only available on the secondary market. A search using the following websites will often turn up sources for the wines: www.wine-searcher.com, www.vinquire.com, www.winezap.com, and www.wineaccess.com. Good auction sites for Pinot Noir are www.winecommune.com and www.vinfolio.com both of which have no fee to the buyer. If there is a Pinot Noir you can't find and just have to have, contact me and I will try to track it down for you through my connections. Keep in mind that there will always be another vintage and stellar producers make quality wine consistently in each vintage. It will not be the same song, but it will be the same composer. Winery mailing lists and winery wine clubs are a good way to insure that you obtain highly coveted Pinot Noirs from a popular producer.

Current prices of North American Pinot Noir run the gamut from \$8 to well over \$100, but generally life begins at \$30. The average price for all the First Team, Second Team and Honorable Mention All-Americans in 2009 was \$53 for California (range of \$33 to \$150) and \$56 for Oregon (range of \$25 to \$82). Collecting and drinking Pinot Noir can be a rich man's game if only trophy or "deep pocket Pinots" are sought after. Fortunately, there are many perfectly fine Pinot Noirs on the market that are priced less than \$30, and the increasing number of these so-called value-priced Pinot Noirs make good Pinot Noir more available now than ever. The 2009 Value Pinot Noir All-Americans represent the best \$35 or under North American Pinot Noirs I have sampled this past year. Value Pinot Noirs do not match up in quality of fruit, aroma, and flavor nuances compared to the more expensive prestige bottlings. You get what you pay for. However, the value-priced Pinot Noirs do offer a perfectly fine everyday drinking experience. Think of them as Pinot Noir unplugged.

I have not kept exact counts, but the number of corked wines seems to be about 5% of wines sampled. Another 3% of wines are just "dumb," that is, not corked (at least I cannot detect TCA), but just not right. Fortunately, for samples at least, I usually have two bottles and only review the stellar bottle. My experience would seem to indicate that about one bottle out of every case will be either corked or not up to snuff. I have not met with any problems with screw cap closures other than some reduction upon opening that dissipates rather quickly. Today the number of truly flawed commercial wines is quite low.

For those Pinot Noirs that were left out of the awards this year, the words of Mark Twain ring true, "It is better to deserve honors and not have them, than to have them and not deserve them." Some incredible wines, like the lineup of 2007 Rhys Vineyards Pinot Noirs, were not tasted formally out of bottle and so are regrettably not included among the All-Americans.



2009 California Pinot Noir All-Americans

First Team

2007 Buena Vista Carneros Ramal Vineyard Estate Vineyard Series Dijon Clones Carneros Pinot Noir 1,120 cases, \$42

Charming nose featuring cherries and berries with hints of savory herbs, green garden and loamy earth. Delicious core of dark red fruits that are sparkling fresh. Velvety smooth in texture, with fine tannins, deft use of oak, and a remarkable persistence on the pleasing finish. A seamless wine of impeccable pedigree.

2007 Clos Pepe Vigneron's Select Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 72 cases, \$59

As good as the regular 2007 bottling is, this one raises the ante a notch. Really heady aromas of black cherries and raspberries with herbs adding interest in the background. Smooth and seamless pie-filling fruits on the palate, showing a perfect marriage of finesse and power. Plenty of fruit to thrill, beautifully framed by supple tannins and a lively vein of minerality and acidity, culminating in a long and scented finish.

2007 Drew McDougall Ranch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 225 cases, \$50

The enticing nose sports bright fresh berries, cardamon spice, violets and Chanel #5. Sweet red fruits saturate the palate with a faint touch of oak. A comforting drink that is smooth and ethereal in the mouth with everything singing in harmony. Still great the next day. Full-on seduction.

2007 Freestone Vineyards Quarter Moon Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 60 cases, \$100

The nose is flat-out unbelievable showing crushed red cherries and berries with intoxicating exotic spices. Can you make a perfume out of this? Spicy and tenacious berry fruit core with ripe tannins and perfectly balanced acidity. Delicate, yet packed with charismatic fruit flavor. Ends in a lingering peacock finish that is orgasmic. One of the greatest California Pinot Noirs I have ever tasted.

2007 J Vineyards Barrel 16 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$70

Moderately deep reddish-purple color. Shy but appealing scents of deep, dark fruit, herb garden and brioche. Luscious black cherry and black raspberry flavors are discreetly concentrated and have a remarkable persistence on the pleasing finish which displays an added echo of dark chocolate, savory herbs and toast. The tannins are very supple, and the mouthfeel is rich, sumptuous and velvety. About as perfect as it gets. Ridiculously good now but will only get better with cellaring.

2007 Littorai Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 121 cases, \$80

Demure but enticing aromas of cherries and raspberries with a hint of Asian spices and oak. Veers a little more toward the redder fruit spectrum than the previous three vintages. Full-on generous flavors of creamy cherry and raspberry fruit. The flavors march in waves across the palate leading to a finish that won't quit. Absolutely gorgeous and pure, and not propelled by high alcohol. A little lighter in weight than the 2004 and 2005 vintages, yet equally, if not more satisfying with more finesse, yet possessing enough tannin to age. Close to a perfect California Pinot Noir.

2007 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$65

Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Complex aromatic profile of black cherries, raspberries, fresh flowers, and earth (what I call muddy boots). Very tasty essence of black cherries and blackberries that really grabs your attention. Refined and delicate with moderate fine-grain tannins, perfect balancing acidity, a silky texture, and pleasing aromatic persistence on the finish. Still marvelous and even better three days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A love letter to keep and treasure.

2007 Paul Lato “Suerte” Solomon Hills Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 150 cases, \$68

Sensual perfume of fresh crushed raspberries and blackberries with the slightest hint of oak. Gorgeous fruit accented with musk and cola and framed harmoniously by soft tannins and a spark of acidity. Pinot my paramour.

2006 Rhys Vineyards Alpine Road Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$49

Deep reddish-purple color and a deeply charmed wine. Taunting aroma of black raspberry jam. Delicious compote of brambly dark and blue berries that is mouth filling, yet majestically toned. There were other flavors that defied description. The tannins were mild, dry and fine-grained, there was notable absence of oak, and the wine had impeccable balance. Drank beautifully the next day from an opened and re-corked bottle. This is a wine that stirs emotion.

2007 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Old Vines Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 100 cases, \$60

The nose is similar to the regular Summa bottling, but with an added magical and penetrating Asian spice scent that smells like the most erotic pheromone in the world. Unbelievably delicious sappy cherry and berry fruit with wisps of sassafras, cola, and exotic spices. The velvety texture is enough to bring you to your knees. An incredible wine that defies adequate description. Suffice it to say that this is a winegasm: one of those Pinot Noirs with such a powerful charisma, that it drives men to do practically anything to get another bottle.

2007 WesMar Balletto Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 255 cases, \$40

Copious black cherries and olallieberries are dominant on the enticing nose accented by a hint of oak, barnyard and Middle Eastern spice. Luscious and generous on the palate tasting of a perfectly ripe dark cherry. Gossamer tannins make for a silky mouth feel and easy drinkability. Finishes with an endless echo of scent and fruit. I could still taste this wine the next day. If I had to pick just one in the WesMar lineup, this would be my paramour.

Second Team

- 2007 Alysian Floodgate Vineyard West Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 444 cases, \$55
- 2007 Black Kite River Turn Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 195 cases, \$52
- 2007 C. Donatiello Floodgate Vineyard Block 15 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 198 cases, \$55
- 2007 Castalia Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 326 cases, \$50
- 2007 Cima Collina Tondre Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 216 cases, \$48
- 2007 Eric Kent Freestone Pinot Noir** 148 cases, \$48
- 2006 Freestone Pastorale Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 67 cases, \$100
- 2007 Lane Tanner Julia's Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 447 cases, \$36
- 2007 Olivet Lane Vineyard Estate Reserve Cuvée Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 168 cases, release 2010
- 2007 Rivers-Marie Occidental Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 180 cases, \$45
- 2007 Sinor-Lavalle Anniversary Cuvée Central Coast Pinot Noir** 47 cases, \$50

Honorable Mention

- 2007 A.P. Vin Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 375 cases, \$40
- 2006 Ampelos Cellars Lambda Ampelos Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 1,059 cases, \$35
- 2007 Anthill Farms Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley \$42
- 2006 Athair Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 650 cases, \$36
- 2006 Artesa Haire Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir 110 cases, \$80
- 2006 B Vineyards & Habitat Sera Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 144 cases, \$65
- 2007 Belle Glos Taylor Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$40
- 2007 Benovia Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 352 cases, \$55
- 2006 Brogan Cellars Morning Dew Ranch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$45
- 2007 Buena Vista Carneros Ramal Vineyard Estate Vineyard Series Swan Selection Carneros Pinot Noir 911 cases, \$42
- 2007 C. Donatiello Hervey Vineyard Green Valley Pinot Noir 515 Magnums, \$142
- 2006 Calera Reed Vineyard Mt. Harlen Pinot Noir 929 cases, \$42
- 2006 Calera Ryan Vineyard Mt. Harlen Pinot Noir 2,155 cases, \$40
- 2006 Calera Selleck Vineyard Mt. Harlen Pinot Noir 793 cases, \$63
- 2006 Capioux Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$46
- 2007 Chasseur Freestone Station Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 375 cases, \$60
- 2007 Chasseur Joyce Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 100 cases, \$60
- 2007 Chasseur Holder Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 75 cases, \$50
- 2007 Chronicle Wines Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 556 cases, \$48. Release in early 2010
- 2007 Clos Pepe Estate Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 650 cases, \$54
- 2007 Copain Hacienda Secoya Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$50
- 2007 Davis Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$40
- 2006 Dehlinger Goldridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 1,600 cases, \$44
- 2007 De La Montanya Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 50 cases, \$50.
- 2007 De Loach Maboroshi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Pinot Noir 435 cases, \$45
- 2006 Dierberg Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir \$42

2007 Drew Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 200 cases, \$42
 2007 Drew Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 200 cases, \$42
 2006 Donum Estate Carneros Pinot Noir 850 cases, \$65
 2007 DuMol Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$65
 2006 Dutton-Goldfield Devil's Gulch Ranch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir \$55
 2007 Dutton Estate Dutton Ranch Karmen Isabella Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 625 cases, \$37
 2006 Elke Vineyards Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 650 cases, \$38
 2006 EMTU Estate Wines Labyrinth Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$40
 2007 En Route Les Pommiers Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 1,200 cases, \$50
 2006 Etude Carneros Pinot Noir \$42
 2006 Etude Temblor Carneros Pinot Noir 495 cases, \$60
 2006 Etude Deer Camp Carneros Pinot Noir 960 cases, \$60
 2006 Evening Land Vineyards The Occidental Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 120 cases, \$150
 2007 Expression 39 Anahala Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$48
 2006 Ferrari-Carano Sky High Ranch Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir \$46
 2007 Foursight Wines Charles Vineyard All-In Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 407 cases, \$46
 2006 Foxen Julia's Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 450 cases, \$54
 2008 George Ceremonial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 315 cases, \$50
 2007 Grey Stack Cellars The Fisherman Connell Family Vineyard Bennet Valley Pinot Noir 50 cases, \$35
 2007 Harrington Brosseau Vineyard Chalona Pinot Noir 132 cases, \$50
 2006 Harrington Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$40
 2007 Heart O' The Mountain Pommard Clone Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 25 cases, \$48
 2007 J Vineyards Nicole's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 1,300 cases, \$65
 2007 Kastania Vineyards Proprietor's Reserve Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 336 cases, \$45
 2007 Keefer Ranch Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 243 cases, \$42
 2006 Kendric Vineyards Marin County Pinot Noir \$33
 2007 Landmark Kanzler Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 500 cases, \$65
 2007 LIOCO Sonoma Carneros Pinot Noir 504 cases, \$38
 2006 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 636 cases, \$65
 2006 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 305 cases, \$70
 2007 Loma Prieta Winery Saveria Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$50
 2007 Loos Family Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 25 cases, \$40
 2007 Lost Canyon Widdoes Vineyard Pinot Noir <125 cases, \$42
 2006 Lucienne Vineyards Lone Oak Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 217 cases, \$45
 2006 Lynmar Hawk Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 486 cases, \$70
 2006 Lynmar Quail Hill Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 1,419 cases, \$60
 2006 MacMurray Winemakers Block Selection Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 400 cases, \$60
 2007 Merryvale Stanly Ranch Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir \$45
 2006 Mount Eden Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 870 cases, \$45
 2007 Navarro Deep-End Blend Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 1,572 cases, \$49
 2007 Olivet Lane Vineyard Pellegrini Family Vineyards Russian River Valley 2,600 cases, \$35
 2007 Olson Ogden Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$42
 2007 Pali Wines Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 110 cases, \$50
 2007 Pali Wines Thorn Ridge Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 180 cases, \$60
 2007 Papapietro Perry Elsbree Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 937 cases, \$49
 2007 Papapietro Perry Peters Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 963 cases, \$49
 2007 Papapietro Perry Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 715 cases, \$45
 2007 Paul Lato "Duende" Gold Coast Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 100 cases, \$63
 2007 Paul Lato "Sine Cera" Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 125 cases, \$73
 2006 Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$65
 2007 Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$65
 2006 Pleasant Valley Vineyards Dylan David Family Estate Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$85
 2007 Red Car The Aphorist Bartolomei Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$54
 2007 Road 31 Wine Co. Napa Valley Pinot Noir 800 cases, \$39
 2006 Rhys Vineyards Home Vineyard San Mateo County Pinot Noir \$59
 2007 Rivers-Marie Summa Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 120 cases, \$45
 2007 Shandel's Oppenlander Vineyard Comptche Mendocino County Pinot Noir 400 cases, \$40
 2006 Silver Mountain Tondre Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$38
 2007 SPELL Barton Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 45 cases, \$47
 2007 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$47

2006 Talisman Adastra Vineyard Los Carneros Pinot Noir 321 cases, \$50
2006 Talisman Thorn Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 503 cases, \$50
2006 Talley Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinor 556 cases, \$70
2006 Tantara Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$60
2007 Thomas Fogerty Winery & Vineyards Rapley Trail M Block Santa Cruz Mtns Pinot Noir 75 cases, \$68
2007 Twomey Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$50
2007 Twomey Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$45
2006 Valdez Family Winery Lancel Creek Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 250 cases, \$65
2006 Valerie's Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir 132 cases, \$40
2006 Vergari Van Der Kamp Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 135 cases, \$45
2007 WesMar Oehlman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 267 cases, \$37
2007 WesMar Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 316 cases, \$35
2006 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 345 cases, \$60
2006 Woodenhead Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 358 cases, \$60
2007 ZD Wines Norman de Leuze Founder's Reserve Carneros Pinot Noir 750 cases, \$65

2009 Best California Value Pinot Noirs

Value Pinot Noirs represent an exceptional price to quality ratio. Generally they are Pinot Noirs priced near or under \$30 that offer the drinker varietal correctness as well as appealing aromatics, flavors, and enough complexity to signify a bargain at the wine's retail price. These wines often make very good daily drinkers. The value Pinot Noirs are designated in my tasting notes by the Pinot Value Icon. The wines below were all sampled in 2009 and with few exceptions (Alesia, JCB, Rivers-Marie), are readily available through the winery or in the retail marketplace. All of them represent plenty of Pinot bang for the buck.



2006 Alesia San Mateo County Pinot Noir \$29
2007 Alfaro Family Vineyards A Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 807 cases, \$25
2007 Balletto Vineyards Burnside Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$22
2007 Balletto Vineyards Winery Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$22
2007 Belle Glos Meiomi Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$25
2007 Bogle Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$13
2007 Bohan-Dillon Hirsch Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$28
2008 Cazar Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$18
2007 Felta Creek Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 150 cases, \$24
2007 Flying Rooster (De La Montanya) Red Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$22
2006 Gallo Family Vineyards Sonoma Reserve Sonoma County Pinot Noir \$18
2007 Greenwood Ridge Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 875 cases, \$30
2006 Hangtime Cellars Force Canyon Vineyard Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir \$15
2007 Husch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$17
2007 J. Lynne Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 973 cases, \$25
2007 J Vineyards & Winery Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14,500 cases, \$35
2007 Joseph Swan Vineyards Cuvée de Troi Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$28
2008 JCB by Jean-Charles Boisset No. 69 Pinot Noir Rosé 200 cases, \$12.75
2006 Ken Brown Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir \$30
2007 La Crema Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 1,800 cases, \$30
2007 La Crema Monterey Pinot Noir \$24
2007 Lucas & Lewellen Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 2,096 cases, \$20
2007 Lucia Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$34
2007 MacMurray Central Coast Pinot Noir \$24
2006 McHenry Swan Clone Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 158 cases, \$25
2006 Olivet Lane Vineyard Pellegrini Family Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$35
2007 Olivet Lane Vineyard Pellegrini Family Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 2,600 cases, \$35
2007 Praxis Cellars Monterey Pinot Noir \$16
2007 Rivers-Marie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 225 cases, \$25
2007 Sinor-LaVallee San Luis Obispo Pinot Noir 104 cases, \$29
2006 Talisman Sonoma County Cuvée Pinot Noir 167 cases, \$26
2007 Three Saints Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir \$24
2007 Verve Old Vines Rio San Lucas Vineyard Monterey County Pinot Noir 98 cases, \$24
2007 Verve Klein Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir \$33

2009 Oregon Pinot Noir All-Americans

First Team

2007 Antica Terra Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 1,270 cases, \$46

Teasing aromas of berry tart and spiced raspberries with a hint of pine tree. Tasty dark berries, black cherries and plum with nuances of minerality, earthiness, seasoned oak, spice and musk, all of which come and go in the glass. There might be some pheromones in there as well as I could not turn away from the glass. This wine has plenty of richness to satisfy, but not in the über rich mold of SQN. It is very clean and silky with imperceptible tannins and impeccable balance. This beauty will hold your interest and is a truly unique artisan Pinot Noir.

2006 Daedelus Maresh Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 140 cases, \$60

Very fruity scents of dark red berry compote with oak playing a pleasing supportive role. Luscious and vibrant core of raspberry fruit with a hint of brioche. Harmonious in every way with an unbelievable persistence on the aromatic finish lasting at least 30 seconds. The pedigree of the fruit really shines through. In my experience, it is extremely rare to find a Pinot Noir with such remarkable persistence.

2006 Dobbles Family Estate Quailhurst Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 237 cases, \$65

Slightly reduced aromas of dark stone fruits, dark chocolate, charred oak and smoke. Lovely black cherry and berry fruit liquor attack the palate and coat every nook and cranny in the mouth. The fruit is ripe but stops short of overripeness. The flavors are stunning, close to a slightly sweet and tart freshly baked cherry pie with a perfect crust and a hint of nutmeg spice. Everything is in harmony with supple tannins and a tangy finish. A distinctive wine with great charisma.

2007 Et Fille Wines Kalita Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 380 cases, \$38

The most perfumed of the 2007 lineup showing scents of dark red cherries and red plums, red roses and a hint of oak. Delicious dark cherry bombast with accents of spice, brioche, pepper and toast. The tannins are gossamer and the cherry aromas linger endlessly on the teasing finish. This beauty has a gentle richness that is very sensual.

2006 J.K. Carriere Gemini Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 64 cases, \$65

The nose is quite alluring as it expands in the glass over time revealing dark red stone fruits, especially black cherries, spice, oak and marzipan. Hearty core of red and black raspberries and cherries engulfed by flamboyant tannins. Two days later this wine was sampled from a previously opened and re-corked bottle and it was drinking beautifully, smoothly textured with more integration of tannins and more expressive fruit. The lesson here is to decant if you have to drink this wine now, but you would be well advised to keep your hands off of it for at least five years. It's got backside 9s on lock.

2007 Ken Wright Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 725 cases, \$47

Deep aromas of black fruits, forest floor and loam draw you in. Earthy dark fruits flood the mouth and fill every nook and cranny. Noticeable oak and tar with a hint of citrus peel on the finish. Big boned and brooding. Picks up expression with time in the glass. This is a wine of obvious pedigree that has the potential to sparkle over the long term. Drank well the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.

2006 Laura Volkman Rachel Estate Oregon Pinot Noir 100 cases, \$38

Moderately deep reddish-purple color. Lovely aromas of black cherry jam and spice. Very tasty and perfectly ripe black cherry and raspberry fruit with a faint citrus underbelly. Hints of sandalwood, spice and earth add interest. A beautiful wine that is rich, yet lively, with supple tannins, a velvety texture and bright acidity on a lengthy finish. Still my favorite all-time Laura Volkman wine.

2007 Lenné Estate Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$45

A selection of the best barrels in the cellar. Lovely scents of cherries, spice, violets and spicy oak. Succulent dark stone fruits fan out nicely on the palate enhanced by notes of cola, Asian spice, savory herbs and forest floor. Silky textured and perfectly balanced. This wine shows more terroir than the LeNez bottling from the same vineyard. One of the best 2007 Pinot Noirs from Oregon I have tasted this year.

2007 Lenné Estate Karen's Pommard Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 73 cases, \$55

The aromas recall an exotic perfume exhibiting wild dark red fruits and spring bouquet. The wine is powerfully flavored yet retains the delicacy and velvety texture that makes Pinot Noir so sensually Multilayered flavors of red plums, ripe berries, currants, spice and a little earthiness. Perfect integration of tannins. There is something magical about this vineyard.

2008 Privé Vineyard le nord Yamhill County Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$49

Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black cherries, black raspberries and a hint of exotic spices. Rich and forthcoming with a blackberry and black cherry core clothed in caressing tannins and possessing the right touch of balancing acidity. More lush and forward than the le sud bottling. A dreamy wine with a creamy texture that is approachable now but will benefit from more time in the cellar. If this wine was a lover instead of a wine, it is the one that would make you abandon your family, leave your job, and forfeit your hard-won position in the community for just one more fling.

2006 Shea Wine Cellars Homer Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 325 cases, \$82

Penetrating and uplifting aromas of dark stone fruits. A great expression of Pinot Noir with layers of powerful flavors including mu shu plum sauce, black raspberry, gregarious baking spice and exotic tea. A tannic edge suggests age ability. A memorable wine that deserves to be opened for a special occasion.

Second Team

- 2006 Auteur Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 313 cases, \$75
- 2006 Carabella Inchinnan Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 250 cases, \$54
- 2006 Domaine Drouhin Willamette Valley Oregon** \$39
- 2007 Kelley Fox Maresh Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 69 cases, \$49
- 2007 Laura Volkman Jacob Estate Oregon Pinot Noir** 135 cases, \$45
- 2007 Lenné Estate Jill's 115 Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 49 cases, \$68
- 2006 L'iris Annie Amie Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 1,200 cases, \$75
- 2007 Scott Paul Audrey Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** \$65
- 2006 Shea Wine Cellars East Hill Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 325 cases, \$55
- 2006 Shea Wine Cellars Pommard Clone Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir**
275 cases, \$55
- 2006 St. Innocent Villages Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** 2,043 cases, \$25

Honorable Mention

- 2007 Adelsheim Boulder Bluff Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Pinot Noir 240 cases, \$58
- 2006 Anam Cara Cellars Heather's Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Pinot Noir 50 cases, \$65
- 2007 Anne Amie Estate 150 cases, \$50
- 2006 Dobbles Family Estate Meyer Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 42 cases, \$65
- 2007 Domaine Drouhin Oregon Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$45
- 2007 Et Fille Maresh Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 151 cases, \$42
- 2006 Evesham Wood Cuvee J Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 171 cases, \$45
- 2006 Johan Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 670 cases, \$35
- 2007 Kelley Fox Wines Momtazi Vineyard McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 133 cases, \$39
- 2006 Laura Volkman Vineyards Jacob Estate Oregon Pinot Noir 200 cases, \$42
- 2006 Ponzi Vineyards Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 2,100 cases, \$60
- 2007 ROCO Private Stash Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$70
- 2006 St. Innocent Vitae Springs Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Gris 783 cases, \$17 (Included here because this is an exceptional example of Oregon Pinot Gris).
- 2006 Styring Vineyards Premier Estate Ribbon Ridge Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 75 cases, \$45
- 2006 The Eyrie Vineyards Original Vines Reserve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$60
- 2006 Verve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 110 cases, \$33
- 2006 WillaKenzie Estate Alette Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 793 cases, \$48

2009 Value Oregon Pinot Noirs

Most of these wines are bottled with a screw cap closure which is much more prevalent in Oregon than California. These wines all offer plenty of Pinot love for under \$35.

2007 Annie Amie Vineyards Cuvée A 3,200 cases, \$25
2006 Benton Lane Oregon Pinot Noir \$20
2006 Brandborg Benchlands Umpqua Valley Pinot Noir \$18
2007 Cardwell Hill Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$25
2007 Cooper Mountain Vineyards 20th Anniversary Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$24
2006 Crowley Entre Nous Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 150 cases, \$27
2006 Dobbles Family Estate Grand Assemblage Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 2,937 cases, \$25
2007 Elk Cove Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 19,750 cases, \$21
2007 Et Fille Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 153 cases, \$24
2007 Evesham Wood Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 225 cases, \$21
2008 Evesham Wood Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$15
2007 Evesham Wood Le Puits Sec Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$30
2007 Grochau Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 1,350 cases, \$24
2007 H Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$21
2007 King Estate Signature Oregon Pinot Noir \$29
2007 Lange Estate Winery & Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 5,500 cases, \$24
2007 Laura Volkman St. James 160 cases, \$20
2007 Le Nez Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$30
2007 O'Reilly's Oregon Pinot Noir \$17
2008 O'Reilly's Oregon Pinot Noir \$17
2007 Owen Roe Sharecropper's Oregon Pinot Noir \$21
2008 Owen Roe Sharecropper's Oregon Pinot Noir \$21
2007 Rex Hill Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$20
2007 Roots Estate Yamhill-Carlton District Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 175 cases, \$25
2007 Roots Crosshairs Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 275 cases, \$25
2007 Scott Paul Le Paulee \$30
2006 Solena Grande Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 3,500 cases, \$25
2006 Spindrift Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$25
2007 St. Innocent Villages Cuvee 2,043 cases, \$25
2006 Styring Vineyards Signature Pinot Noir 120 cases, \$30
2007 Van Duzer Vineyards Vintner's Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 4,500 cases, \$20
2006 Verve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 110 cases, \$33
2007 Verve Momtazi Vineyard McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 150 cases, \$33
2007 Witness Tree Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$28
2007 Westrey Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$22
2007 Willakenzie Estate Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir \$26

2009 Best American Chardonnays

All of these wines were sampled in 2009. Heintz Vineyard and Ritchie Vineyard on a label regardless of producer is a guarantee that you are getting a special Chardonnay. Most of these wines are still available from the winery or through the retail marketplace.

2007 Alysian Cresta Ridge Vineyard Taurin Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$38

2007 Aubert Ritchie Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay \$80

2007 Benovia La Pommeraie Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$48

2006 Breggio Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay \$34

2006 Dehlinger Russian River Valley Chardonnay \$33

2007 Evening Lands Seven Springs Vineyard La Source Eola-Amity Hills Chardonnay \$80

2007 Freestone Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 1,300 cases, \$75

2007 Freestone Pastorale Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 108 cases, \$100.

2007 Harmonique Delicacé Anderson Valley Chardonnay 98 cases, \$59

2006 Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay \$50

2006 L'Angevin Charles Heintz Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay (Note: this producer has changed names to Peirson-Meyer for the winery's Chardonnays) \$55

2007 LIOCO Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay 225 cases, \$35

2007 LIOCO Sonoma County Chardonnay \$19 (Best Value)

2007 Lucas & Lewellen Santa Barbara County Chardonnay 1,002 cases, \$16 (Best Value)

2006 Ramey Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay \$63

2008 Russian River Vineyards Limited Left Edge Selection Manchester Ridge Mendocino County Chardonnay \$34

2006 Tandem Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Chardonnay \$34

New Pinot Hounds in the Race

Over the past year or two, not a week went by that I didn't hear of a new producer of Pinot Noir. Part of this has been fueled by the increasing number of custom crush facilities that allow newcomers to make small lots of premium Pinot Noir under the guidance of experienced winemakers (so-called virtual wineries). The most notable example of this is Crushpad in San Francisco. Industrial parks have also been a popular spot for starting up a small winery, allowing producers to concentrate on obtaining quality grapes and investing in top winemaking equipment without the added costs of glamorous winery facilities and tasting rooms. Because of our crummy economy, it is not clear how many of these new hounds will still be in the race in another year or two. List below are the most promising newcomers with only a vintage or two under their collar.

CALIFORNIA

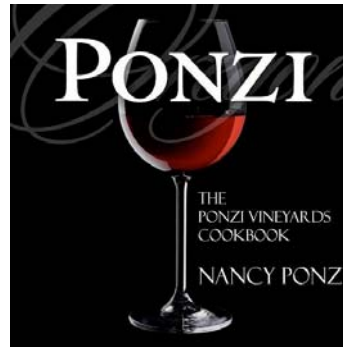
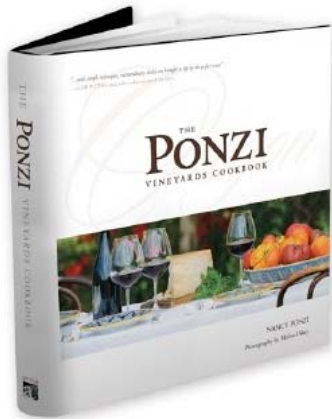
Alysian Wines, Russian River Valley
Asunscion Ridge, Atascadero (Paso Robles AVA)
Big Basin Vineyards, Santa Cruz Mountains
Black Ridge Vineyards, Santa Cruz Mountains
Bohemian Vineyard, Sonoma Coast
C. Donatiello, Russian River Valley
Canihan Family Cellars, San Francisco
Chronicle Wines, Sonoma
Couloir Wines, Anderson Valley
Dragonette Cellars, Sta. Rita Hills
EnRoute, Russian River Valley
Expression Wines, Napa Valley
Fog Crest Vineyard, Russian River Valley
Freestone Vineyards
Grey Stack Cellars
Heart O' The Mountain, Santa Cruz Mountains
LIOCO Winery, Russian River Valley
Loos Family Winery, Russian River Valley
Lucienne, Santa Lucia Highlands
Périples Wines, Idaho, grapes sourced from California and Oregon
Pfundler Vineyards, Sonoma Mountain
Prodigal Wines, Sta. Rita Hills
Richard Berridge Wines
Salinia Wine Company, Russian River Valley
Sequana Vineyards, Russian River Valley
Seawind Wines, San Francisco
Silver Wines, Santa Barbara County
SPELL Wines, Russian River Valley
Three Saints Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley
Truett Hurst, Dry Creek Valley
Valerie's Vineyard, Carneros
Waits-Mast Family Cellars, San Francisco
Waxwing Wine Cellars, San Mateo County

OREGON

Arterberry Maresh, Dundee Hills
Barking Frog Winery, Yamhill-Carlton District
Evening Land Vineyards, Oregon and California
Johan Vineyards, Willamette Valley
Kelley Fox Wines, Yamhill Carlton District
iOTA Cellars, Eola-Amity Hills
Lenné Estate, Yamhill-Carlton District
Longplay, Chehalem Mountains
Roots Wines & Vineyard, Yamhill-Carlton District
Winderlea Vineyard & Winery, Dundee Hills

Wine Books of Interest

The Ponzi Vineyards Cookbook



Nancy Ponzi has had a remarkable career in wine, but it may be her zeal for cooking that determines her legacy. As the subheading of the Preface of this book proclaims, “It takes a lot of food to make great wine.” Nancy should know, for forty years ago she and her husband, Dick, left successful careers in California to start a new life in wine in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. They were part of the hippie generation, idealists determined to return to the land for their sustenance. Interestingly enough, it was a trip to visit Dick’s brother in Iceland, of all places, where they experienced homemade celery wine, that would plant the seed of enthusiasm for crafting their own wine. In 1970, the Ponzis become one of the pioneering wine families in Oregon, planting a Pinot Noir vineyard just outside of Portland in a farming community known as Beaverton and launching Ponzi Vineyards.

What Nancy was quick to discover is that a large crew had to be fed with each harvest. As the winery grew in notoriety, wine and food professionals descended on the winery frequently and had to be entertained. Consumers too, were infatuated with the wine grape culture, and clamored to attend dinners at the winery. Nancy realized that her main contribution to the winery would be food so she set out to become an accomplished cook. She cultivated an organic garden, made cheese, read cooking books voraciously, attended and eventually taught cooking classes, and even owned and operated two successful restaurants.

This book is a personal collection of over 80 recipes that exemplify the winery kitchen. The cookbook evolved primarily from the Ponzi Amici Cellar Club in which Nancy’s recipes were paired with selected Ponzi wines as a unique feature that consumers enjoyed. Each recipe is intertwined with the history of Oregon wine and Ponzi Vineyards, the many trips abroad that form the basis for a number of the recipes, and the contributions of friends and family. The recipes travel the globe ranging from Italian classics like spaghetti and meatballs to French staples like Coquilles St. Jacques. Many recipes are grounded in the Northwest such as Northwest Choucroute and Chanterelle Soup. Whatever the origins, the emphasis is on fresh ingredients, simple preparation, and basic home cooking tools and techniques. Each recipe is accompanied by the stunning photography of Michael Shay, teasing the appetite of the reader to enter the kitchen.

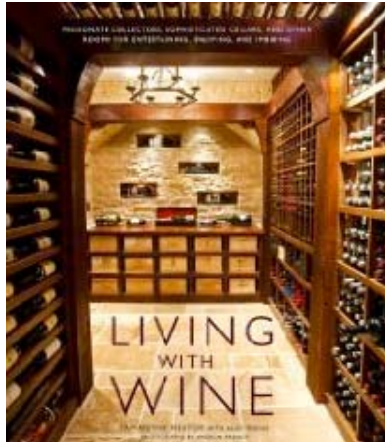
The “Do” and “Don’t” general tips for entertaining in the Introduction are invaluable. The ideas are very straightforward, but often overlooked by the host or hostess amid the anxiety over hosting a meal. Perhaps the best bit of advice is the last one. “Never apologize. Your apology will only diminish your culinary standing, your guests’ comfort zone (then they have to fib that it is really so, so delicious), and open the door to any previously politely silent ‘expert.’ Anyway, your next dish will probably be fine.....it’s just food.”

Practical, endearing, and highly personal, this is a cookbook to treasure. If you are a Pinot lover like myself, you will be particularly charmed, since many of the recipes pair beautifully with this grape. Anyone for wild mushroom risotto and Ponzi Reserve Pinot Noir?

The Ponzi Vineyards Cookbook, by Nancy Ponzi, Arnica Publishing, hard bound, 184 pages, 2009, \$24.95.

Living with Wine

Passionate Collectors, Sophisticated Cellars, and Other Rooms for Entertaining, Enjoying, and Imbibing



This book offers the wine lover a voyeuristic peek into thirty of the most extravagant and spectacular wine cellars in the United States. One cannot help but marvel at the grandeur of some of these rooms and the impressive wine collections contained therein. The stories behind the passionate wine collectors and their distinctive cellars is told by James Beard Award-winning wine writer, Alice Feiring, in conjunction with noted interior design and architecture writer, Samantha Nestor. The color photography of Andrew French is stunning and amplified by the large size of this volume.

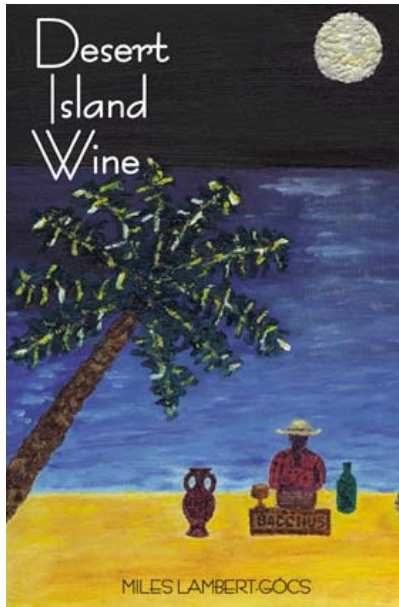
The book is divided into five parts: the Entertaining Pair's Lair, the Gentlemen's Haven, the Sybarite's Sanctuary, the Modernist Refuge, and Urban Retreats and Inspiring Spaces. The size of most of these cellars indicates the zeal with which wine connoisseurs will pursue their collection. While most of the featured cellars royally display 2,000 to 3,000 bottles, more than enough wine for most imbibers, one mind-boggling cellar houses 60,000 bottles of fine wine.

Most readers can only dream about having such lavish cellars for their beloved wine collections. The book does not give any estimates of the cost of designing and building these eye-popping wine cellars, but clearly these architectural marvels came at a considerable expense, in some cases exceeding the value of the wines resting inside.

This work is a coffee table book at heart that will please those who delight in marveling at what extremes collectors will go to in displaying their beloved wines. It will be particularly appealing to those who find admiration in the creative designs that the owners and artisans display in these distinctive wine cellars. The volume may even stimulate readers to embark on their own wine cellar project.

Living with Wine, by Samantha Nestor with Alice Feiring, photographs by Andrew French, Clarkson Potter Publishers, New York, hard bound, 256 pages, 2009, \$75.

Desert Island Wine



You will need to brush up on your knowledge of Greek mythology, in particular Dionysus, the classic Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle, as well as America's first oenophile, Thomas Jefferson, to fully grasp the humor in this book. The author, Miles Lambert-Gócs, has a remarkable grasp of both wine and history, and through a series of assorted cunning essays, brings historical and mythical figures into wine discussions that are based on up to date wine knowledge and controversial issues. The parodies take straight aim at the pretentiousness of the wine world.

The book leads off with "Live from Olympus," a colorful CNN interview with Dionysus. Dionysus, of course was the son of Zeus and the god of wine. He is asked in the interview, "Would you ever consider, say, de-alcoholized wine? His answer, "I'll shave my beard before I have it." A subtle jab at Robert Parker, Jr., is included. Dionysus remarks, "I don't take kindly to impersonators, and Parker pretends to speak with my authority." While reading this piece, my wife had to come in and check on me I was laughing so loud.

My favorite essay is "Field Guide," detailing the origins, range, habitat, food, senses, breeding and enemies of *Anthropos oenopotis* or Winebiber Man. Not surprisingly, the reader discovers that *Anthropos oenopotis* is a cave dweller with furnishings of Limousin or Nevers oak, tends to crave high-fat foods because of an intuitive faith in The French Paradox, mating is along rhinal lines with the greatest accolades among the species awarded to those individuals who are able to determine the geographical, varietal and vintage origins just by the sense of smell, without ever actually having to taste the wine!

The title of the book, *Desert Island Wine*, refers to Chapter 28, "One on One - reflections on a stint of drinking the same wine daily." The author relates his personal experience as a "devoted monogamist" drinking the same white wine a day. We are never privy to the name of the actual wine, but that is not the point. He finds, "A lack of variety could actually call forth a greater effort to exercise my inclination for perception."

No wine subject is sacrosanct in this book including filtration, acidity in wine, terroir, wine-food matching, quirky winemakers and so forth. This is definitely not a read for wine drinkers who relish in haughtiness. If you are a wine enthusiast with slicked back hair and gold jewelry and like to brag about how expensive the wine you are drinking is, this book is not for you.

As you read through this book, you will find yourself challenged to grasp all the subtle humor and some essays will need to be reread to fully appreciate the author's intent. It is a highly intellectually challenging volume that will be best enjoyed with an appropriate glass of fine wine that forces one to think.

Desert Island Wine, by Miles Lambert-Gócs, published by Ambeli Press of Williamsburg, Virginia in cooperation with the Wine Appreciation Guild of South San Francisco, soft bound, 190 pages, 2007, \$14.95. Signed and inscribed copies are available postpaid for \$16 from the author: write him at 1008 Settlement Dr., Williamsburg, Virginia 23188.



Felton Road Vineyard, Central Otago, New Zealand

Vintner's Night Before Christmas

The harvest was perfect
The crush was A-1
Total production was
Up by a ton

The wine was all bundled
Up snug in French oak
Fermentation awakened
Amid memories of cold soak

Who will now buy it?
And how will it be priced?
Will Parker anoint it?
Will the Prince be enticed?

Well, wait until morning
You've earned a respite
A cool glass of Pinot
And to all, a "Good Night!"

Best Wishes, Happy Holidays, and Sweet Pinot Dreams

Prince