



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*Great Pinot is a
Liquefied Form
of Art*

Sojourn Cellars: Pull Up a Lawn Chair

"It is a common saying, and in everybody's mouth, that life is but a sojourn."

Plato

Craig Haserot and Erich Bradley are two friends who first met on the tennis courts of Sonoma and decided to launch a partnership to produce artisanal wines. Using the meaning of sojourn as a rest or respite, they started Sojourn Cellars, appropriately displaying a lawn chair on the label. They are one of the few wineries in California to specialize in both Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon. Since their first vintage of Pinot Noir in 2004, they have steadily increased production of vineyard-designate wines and in 2010 will be releasing six Pinot Noirs along with three Cabernet Sauvignons.

Erich Bradley is a native Californian from the San Francisco Peninsula who became intrigued by wine when his family bought a 26-acre ranch in Sonoma County's Valley of the Moon complete with an 8.5-acre vineyard and a 500 case winery. As part of the sale, the Bradleys were taught winemaking. Erich later studied winemaking at University of California at Davis and viticulture at Santa Rosa Junior College and was mentored by winemakers Richard Arrowood of Arrowood Vineyards & Winery and David Ramey of Ramey Wine Cellars. In 2003, Erich became the winemaker for Audelssa Estate, a winery at Mountain Terraces Vineyard in Sonoma Valley, where he still makes wine today. He produces a Mountain Terraces Cabernet Sauvignon for both Audelssa Estate Winery and Sojourn Cellars. In 2007, he became winemaker for Hop Kiln and HK Generations wines. Erich's wines have garnered widespread acclaim among both the press and consumers.

Craig Haserot is the man behind sales, management and promotion of the Sojourn Cellars label. He is an ex-computer software salesperson who decided to move to Sonoma County after the crash and pursue a new career. He began playing tennis at Maxwell Farms Regional Park where he struck up a friendship with Erich Bradley. Both had a passion for wine, especially Pinot Noir, and soon they were talking about launching a winery together. Erich was only interested in making wine and Craig had the background in sales and marketing. They started in 2001 with the release of 150 cases of Sonoma Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and by 2004 they added Pinot Noir to their production lineup. The 2004 Sangiacomo Vineyard Pinot Noir was well received at the same time that the movie 'Sideways' was grabbing popularity and sales of Sojourn Pinot Noir took off.

In late 2008, Craig engineered the opening of a unique Tasting Salon, just off the square in the town of Sonoma at 141 East Napa Street. Guests are invited for a personal 45 minute seated tasting of Sojourn wines conduction by the winemaking staff, or Craig or his wife Ellen. I know Craig and if he is available, he is certain to grab your attention with his smile and enthusiasm. There is no charge for tastings, and the Salon can receive up to 12 guests. Reservations are available at 707-938-7212.

Craig and Ellen Haserot have adopted a yellow Labrador retriever named Ziggy that has been trained to detect 2,4,6- trichloroanisole (TCA) or cork taint. She spent several months in training with Steve Sullivan who supplies products to the wine industry. The dog can detect TCA in oak in amounts as small as four parts per trillion! The dog has worked part-time for Stavin closures using her nose to detect TCA. She also likes to chase tennis balls.

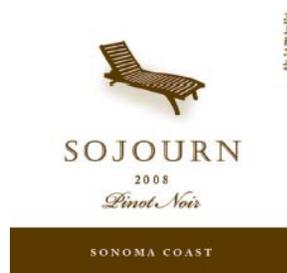


The 2008 lineup of Sojourn Cellars Pinot Noirs is very impressive. Intense sorting is practiced both in the field and in the winery. Whole berry (100% de-stemmed) native fermentations are carried out in small open-top fermenters with punch downs by hand. The must is gently basket pressed and the Pinot Noirs are raised in 50% new French oak barrels. The wines are bottled unfined and unfiltered. I recently sampled three of the 2008 releases and was enticed by the generous aromatics.



2008 Sojourn Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.72, 550 cases, \$39.

A blend from several vineyards in the Sonoma Coast AVA including the Fedrick Vineyard, Windsor Oaks Vineyard and Sangiacomo Vineyard. All Dijon clones (115, 667, 777). *Very lovely scents of black raspberries, cassis and underbrush. A strikingly smooth and easy going wine featuring the redder spectrum of Pinot fruits including strawberries and raspberries with a hint of sassafras. The tannins are very supple and the whole package is perfectly harmonious. I could sip this one all night. The wine faded a bit the next day from an opened and re-corked bottle so drink this one up now.*



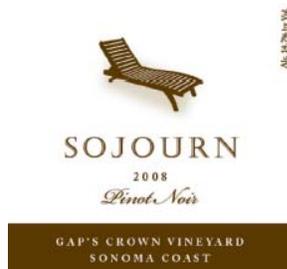
2008 Sojourn Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.,

pH 3.66, 580 cases, \$48. This vineyard is located at the western base of Sonoma Mountain. Clones 115 and 777 are from blocks that are more than ten years old. *Plenty of Pinot singing here beginning with enticing aromas of mixed berry jam and spice box including cardamon. Delicious rainbow of berry fruits discreetly concentrated and beautifully layered. Silky smooth in the mouth with remarkable persistence on the aromatic finish. The fruit is pulled into perfect alignment with fine acidity and tannin and the oak adds just the right nuances. Heaven-sent.*



2008 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH

3.63, 440 cases, \$48. This vineyard is located on Roberts Road just above the Sangiacomo Vineyard on the west-facing slopes of Sonoma Mountain in the Petaluma Gap. *Nuanced aromatics featuring notes of spiced plums, pine pitch, wooded forest and a little good funk. Intense and concentrated darker fruits are set off by a hint of white pepper and oak. Very smoothly textured with a pleasing fruity persistence on the finish. Not as expressive now as the other 2008 Sojourn wines and needs to shed some tannin. This wine has a way to go before it completely reveals itself. That said, the wine possesses obvious potential. Very good.*



A fourth Pinot Noir was released in the 2008 vintage from Rodgers Creek Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast. Sojourn Cellars wines are largely sold through a mailing list with some retail distribution. Visit the website at www.sojourncellars.com.

August Briggs Winery: "To Blow a Dandelion is to Make a Wish"

August (Joe) Briggs produces limited quantities of wines sourced from selected vineyards, both little-known and legendary, in California's North Coast counties. Joe brings over twenty-five years of winemaking experience to his winery. A graduate of the enology program at California State University at Fresno, Joe is a respected consulting winemaker who has worked for wineries in the Willamette Valley and La Crema Winery in the Russian River Valley. He founded August Briggs Winery in 1995 with his wife Sally, producing multiple varietals including Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Cabernet Sauvignon, Charbono, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel (a total of sixteen wines in all). Pinot Noir and Zinfandel are specialties.



Vineyard sources for Pinot Noir include Archer Vineyard (Jackson clone), Cummings Vineyard (Dijon 115, 667 and 777), and Hedin Vineyard (Davis clones) in the Russian River Valley, Dutton Vineyard (Dijon 113, Pommard) in Green Valley of Russian River Valley, Green Island Vineyard (Dijon clones) in the Napa Valley, and Sinskey Vineyard (Dijon 115) in Napa Carneros.

After twenty years of yearning for a home to make his wine, Joe opened the August Briggs Winery and tasting room in Calistoga, a first for him and a first for the city of Calistoga, which had been known for its health spas and fine dining, but until 2004 had had no working winery within the city limits. Located at 333 Silverado Trail, this 8,000 square foot facility encompasses a winery, tasting room and offices. August Briggs is one of the few Napa Valley tasting rooms that offers a complimentary tasting. The tasting room is open daily (707-942-4912). An excellent blog is available through the website at www.augustbriggswines.com.



I recently sampled two August Briggs Pinot Noir releases from the 2008 vintage and can highly recommend both wines. Regrettably, this is one of the few producers in California whose Pinot Noirs I had not sampled. Joe is the consulting winemaker for Castle Rock and I have had a number of those Pinot Noirs, but they are not intended to be in the class of Joe's Pinot Noir crafted under the August Briggs label. The 2007 vintage of

the August Briggs Pinot Noirs is sold out, but fortunately the 2008 vintage wines are to be released next month and available.

The winemaking regimen is as follows. Grapes are hand sorted, 100% de-stemmed and placed into small open-top fermenters. A short cold soak is followed by inoculation with Assmanhausen yeast. Punch downs are carried out by hand. The wine is inoculated for MLF and barreled down in 30% new and 70% two and three-year-old French oak barrels for 8 months. Bottled without fining or filtration.



2008 August Briggs Dijon Clones Napa Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 805 cases, \$40, release date is May 2010. Sourced from the certified organic Sinskey Vineyard (Napa Carneros) and Green island Vineyard (Napa Valley). Dijon clones. *A lovely medium-bodied wine offering charm from beginning to end. Enticing aromas of black cherries, cardamon spice and a hint of toasty oak. Juicy melange of vivid berries and cherries on the palate with a tasty savory note and supportive but not intrusive oak in the background. The silky tannins make for easy drinking. The wine picks up intensity in the glass which is always a sign of a well-crafted wine.*



2008 August Briggs Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 503 cases, \$38, release date is May 2010. Sourced from Cummings, Dutton and Archer Vineyards. *The fruity nose is subtle but seductive with black cherries flanked by cola and spice. Moderately light and delicate on the palate, the black cherry core is enhanced by notes of cola, and fungivorous delights. Beautifully crafted with well proportioned supple tannins and bright acidity, this is quintessential Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Very good.*



August Briggs wines are available through the winery tasting room, website and mailing list and distribution in more than fifteen markets nationally. A 2008 Carneros Pinot Noir from the Sinskey Vineyard (173 cases) was also produced.

Fulcrum Wines

Owner David Rossi began crafting wine at home well over ten years ago and his success in amateur winemaking competitions led him to launch Fulcrum Wines. His wife, Christinna, assists David with sales and contributes another palate to blending decisions.

David has an admirable philosophy: produce wines that are balanced and age-worthy. A fulcrum is a point of balance for a lever and his goal is to leverage the best wine out of the best grapes while maintaining balance.

He crafts his wines at Crushpad's modern urban winery in San Francisco. David has a background in food marketing and it shows in the classy presentation of his wines. Each bottle is carefully wrapped in tissue and encased in a paper collar that has a seal depicting an acrobat juggling. This image embodies David's guiding theme of balance. Six bottles are presented in a handsomely engraved wood box that is very impressive. Of course, it is the wine in the bottle that really matters, but careful attention to outwardly appearance of the bottle and label is often a sign of meticulous attention in the winery.

The 2008 vintage of Fulcrum wines brings a new brand at a value price, a change in vineyard name on one bottling, and the addition of a new vineyard source, the Tina Marie Vineyard in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Because the 2008 vintage was a warm growing season in Sonoma, the Gap's Crown and Tina Marie bottlings have riper flavors and slightly more alcohol. The alcohol is more moderate in the On Point bottling from the Santa Lucia Highlands where the heat was not as pronounced. As you know, 2008 in the Anderson Valley was a nightmare. Low rainfall over the winter was followed by frosts in the spring, and then catastrophic fires in the summer. The Anderson Valley bottling is very limited (75 cases) due to low crop yields caused by frost.

The Fulcrum Pinot Noir from Gap's Crown Vineyard was previously called Split Rock Pinot Noir. In 2007, the grapes were purchased through a broker who did not have trademark rights to using the vineyard's name. In 2008, grapes were contracted directly with the owners of Gap's Crown Vineyard so the use of the property's proper name is permitted. This new contract allows better control over the farming of the blocks that grapes are sourced from.

The On Point bottling follows the trend of many Pinot Noir producers in offering a value-priced alternative brand for consumers who are fans of the winery and winemaking, but are looking for a dependable wine that is easy on the wallet. The On Point Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir is intended for those looking for a good Pinot Noir under \$30. This is never an easy task, as Rossi insists on making the wine in the same manner as the other Fulcrum wines. The grapes are sourced from Tondre Grapefield and Doctor's Vineyard, the same grapes that go into vineyard designated Pinot Noirs priced at up to \$50 from many producers. The wine is aged in 40% new French Francois Freres oak for 14 months and 6 months of bottle age before release. The On Point name is intended as a tie in for the Fulcrum principal of balance.



2008 ON Point Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 150 cases, \$28, release date May 11, 2010. 86% Tondre Grapefield and 14% Doctor's Vineyard. Clones 828, 115, 777 and Swan selection. *Aromas of blueberries with minty and green bean notes. Medium-bodied with a decent core of darker fruits with a subtle green edge.*

Picks up some charm in the glass over time, but remains a simple wine. Does not have the powerful fruit intensity that is typical of wines from the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. Decent.



2008 Fulcrum Wines Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 100 cases, \$54, release date June 10, 2010. Clones 777, 828 and 6678. Aged in 50% new French oak for 14 months. *Appealing aromas of fresh dark berries with a hint of forest floor and peat. Full-bodied and juicy, with a mouth coating melange of blackberries and raspberry coulis. The middle palate is rich and penetrating and the finish*

displays young firm tannins that should resolve. Wines from this vineyard need time to develop and I would give this at least two years in the cellar. Good now but could get better.

2008 Fulcrum Wines Tina Marie Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 125 cases, \$48, release date May 10, 2010. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 14 months in 40% new French oak and 6 months in bottle. *Effusive aromatics featuring mixed berry jam and exotic spices. Creamy in the mouth with discreetly concentrated core of black cherries, raspberries, loamy earth and a touch of citrus lift on the refreshing finish. The tannins are reigned in making for early drinkability. Nicely balanced. Very good.*

2008 Fulcrum Wines Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 75 cases, \$52, release date June 11, 2010. 67% Hein Family Vineyard and 33% Hayley Vineyard. Clones 115 and 777. Aged 14 months in 25% new French oak with additional aging in bottle for 6 months. *A fruity nose featuring creme-de-cassis with a ripe raisiny tone and a hint of alcohol. Moderately rich berry and cherry fruit that is still reserved hidden behind flavors of oak and a strain of herbaceousness. Appealingly smooth texture and a dry finish. Good.*



The small production of Fulcrum wines is sold through a mailing list with limited restaurant and retail accounts. Visit the website at www.fulcrumwines.com.

Talbott Vineyards: Family Inspired

Talbott's Sleepy Hollow Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands has become legendary for its Chardonnays. More recently, the winery's Pinot Noirs have brightened the pinotophile's radar with the planting of new Pinot Noir selections in the vineyard over the past two decades. This iconic California winery was founded by Robb Talbott in 1982 with planting of the original mountaintop Diamond T Estate Vineyard and the construction of the original winery in Carmel Valley. The winery's first release of Chardonnay was in 1983. In 1994, the Talbotts acquired the Sleepy Hollow Vineyard and the property became the home to the winery's current winery.

Winemakers Dan Karlsen and Robb Talbott guide Talbott's Chardonnay and Pinot Noir programs. Dan Karlsen is a Pinot Noir specialist with over 30 years of winemaking experience. Wines are bottled under various labels include Case Pinot Noir, Kali-Hart Pinot Noir, Logan Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and Talbott Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Robb Talbott is a member of the family who moved to Carmel, California in 1950 and started the Robert Talbott Tie Company. While on traveling trips with his family to Europe, he visited the vineyards of Burgundy and developed an interest in wine. A nature lover, Robb originally built his own cabin on a remote piece of land high above the Carmel Valley floor. This property would one day become the Diamond T Vineyard, named after an antique "Diamond T" commercial truck Robb had restored. In 1981, Robb married and had three children whose names would be the nomenclature for Talbott Vineyards wines: Sarah Case, Robert Logan and Kalin Hart.

In 1982, Robb launched Talbott Vineyards with his father Robert Talbott Senior and planted his first grapes on Diamond T Vineyard. Since the founding, Robb has continued as an active sales and marketing manager while performing as Chairman of the Board for the Robert Talbott Tie Company.

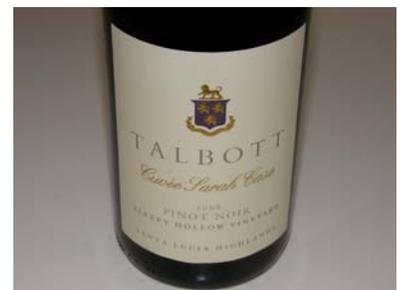
The Sleepy Hollow Vineyard is located in the northern portion of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. This steep, hilly vineyard is split into three parcels, called North, South and West. Yields are kept low by lean soils and meticulous pruning, averaging 2.5 tons per acre.

I recently sampled two newly released Talbott Pinot Noirs from the 2008 vintage. The two wines are distinctive expressions of Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Pinot Noir and represent two wines spanning a wide price range reflecting the vineyard sources and barrel programs.

2008 Talbott Logan Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 15.1% alc., pH 3.76, \$25. Named for Robb Talbott's son, Robert Logan Talbott. First vintage in 1994 was introduced in 1997. Sourced from Sleepy Hollow Vineyard. A blend of 36-year-old Martini clone and young Dijon and Pommard clones. 100% destemmed. Barrel aged for 11 months. *Deeply colored. The cherry fruits have a very ripe, roasted quality adding scents of plum pudding, berry jam and marzipan. The overripe fruit core is clothed in soft tannins making for a velvety mouth feel. I suspect the Brix was high at harvest and the wine was apparently not watered back. For fans of the ripe style of Pinot Noir. Good.*



2008 Talbott Cuvée Sarah Case Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 15.3% alc., pH 3.45, \$75. Named in of Robert Talbott's eldest daughter Sarah Case Talbott. This is the inaugural release of this Pinot Noir from the Sleepy Hollow Vineyard. Two Dijon clones from prized blocks of 10 to 15-year-old vines. Aged 12 months in 100% new French oak barrels and bottle aged for an additional 6 months. *Deep, dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Unusual but nuanced aromatics showing scents of dark chocolate, soy, cut flowers and lacquered wood. Moderately rich core of plum and cassis flavors pushing ripeness, robed in firm but caressing tannins, and displaying some persistence on the finish that leaves a little heat in its wake. Good.*



Talbott Vineyards wines are available online at www.talbottvineyards.com, through retail distribution and at the winery's tasting room located in Carmel Valley Village, 12 miles east of Carmel. Decorated in Early California style, the Tasting Room has a patio that is ideal for picnicking. Open daily from 11:00 to 5:00. 831-659-3500.

Belle Glos: Caymus Genes

Belle Glos (pronounced BELL GLOS) is owned by the Wagner family of Napa Valley Caymus Vineyards fame. Caymus Special Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Mer Soleil Chardonnay, and Caymus Conundrum are well known wines, but the winery has a long history with Pinot Noir, producing some excellent examples from relatively warm locations of the Napa Valley (Rutherford) in the late 1970s and 1980s. They even produced a Pinot Noir Blanc wine labeled "Eye of Partridge."

The Pinot Noir program was revived in 2001 with the release of Belle Glos Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir and the wines have improved every year since. The name comes from Charles J. (Chuck) Wagner's mother, Loma Belle Glos Wagner, a founder of Caymus Vineyards. Joseph Wagner, a fourth generation winemaker whose family's roots in the Napa Valley date to 1906, has been the label's vineyardist and winemaker since 2002. Belle Glos is a separate label from Caymus Vineyards, much like Mer Soleil and Conundrum, made independently from wines Chuck Wagner makes at Caymus Vineyards, referred to as "by the Wagner Family" rather than "by Caymus," but distributed by Caymus Vineyards.

Caymus farms Pinot Noir in three coastal regions including the Sonoma Coast, Santa Maria Valley and the Santa Lucia Highlands and produces vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from the estate vineyards in each region. A fourth Pinot Noir, Meiomis, is a value-priced wine found in wide distribution and restaurants. A distinctive and excellent rosé, is also produced that revives the name, "Oeil De Perdrix," sourced from the Yorkville Highlands of Mendocino County. The Gambit Series of Pinot Noirs debuted in 2008 at Pinot Days San Francisco. These limited production single-vineyard wines with no added sulfur were intended to offer the rich and voluptuous nature of raw Pinot Noir grapes. I have not seen or heard of these wines since, but they are briefly described on the Belle Glos website.

Caymus acquired a portion of the historic Santa Maria Hills Vineyard in the 1990s. The land, on a west-facing slope of the Santa Maria Valley foothills, had been planted to Pinot Noir from 1972 to 1974, so the vines were almost ancient by California Pinot Noir standards. The vines were own rooted and the clone uncertain, but probably Martini, an heirloom clone that was one of the first Pinot Noir selections to grace California coast lands. I first reviewed the 2001 Belle Glos Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir in the July 7, 2003, issue of the *PinotFile*, and the wine was generally well received by the wine press. At the time, little was known of the label. Bob Hosmon of the *Miami Sun Sentinel* wrote, "To say that this is one of the best United States-produced Pinot Noirs I've ever tasted is not an overstatement....if you're looking for something truly special, you won't be disappointed. Unfortunately no website, mail, e-mail or phone orders." The website is still very basic and offers no opportunity to purchase the wines. With the 2002 vintage, winemakers Joseph Wagner and Jon Bolta (Conundrum) took what was already a low-yielding 76-acre vineyard and reduced the crop even more radically by regular thinning to increase the flavor concentration of the berries. When the grapes were hand harvested, they ended up with just over one ton per acre. The quality was so high and the flavors so distinctive they felt the wine deserved to be named for the vineyard that produced it which was located at the intersection of Clark & Telephone roads.

The 10-acre Sonoma Coast Taylor Lane Vineyard was planted near the town of Occidental in 1995. While Joseph Wagner was in middle school he helped develop this vineyard, clearing trees and rocks from this previously unplanted land, and laying out and planting the vine rows. To get the grapes to ripen in this cool seaside climate, the trellis system was converted to "Trentina," named after the region in Italy where it originated, which maximizes sun exposure on the leaves. There is a very consistent diurnal temperature variation at this vineyard site which insures a good balance between ripeness and acidity. The first Belle Glos Taylor Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir was in 2002.

The Las Alturas Vineyard is located in one of the highest plantable sites in the Santa Lucia Highlands of Monterey County, at altitudes of 540 to 1,210 feet. The site has warmer afternoons and tamer winds than the northern portion of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. This 15-acre vineyard was planted to match various Pinot Noir Dijon clones to different soils and slopes of the vineyard. Yields are kept deliberately low. The inaugural vintage from this vineyard was 2004.

The Belle Glos Pinot Noirs in the early vintages (2002-2005) were big styled wines with generous extraction, alcohol and oak, and plenty of tannin when young. The fruit intensity reminded one of Caymus Cabernet Sauvignons. The wines went through an extended cold soak and maceration and generous new French oak

was used. The recent vintages have shown more restraint and charm. Although the single vineyard Pinot Noirs retail for \$50, they can be found in the marketplace for around \$38 a bottle.

The Belle Glos bottles are among the most esthetically pleasing in the business, offering a long neck dipped in soft, Burgundy-colored wax. An ungodly bright pink color is chosen for the Rosé bottling wax. In recent vintages, a rip cord has been embedded in the wax to ease removal of the wax top, but I am sure many women have cursed this closure after breaking a nail in attempting to unravel the tight rip cord. That said, women can probably understand the value of style over practicality.



2008 Meiomi by Belle Glos Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$24. 65% Sonoma County, 20% County, 15% Santa Barbara County. Pronounced “May-OH-mee,” which is “coast” in the language of California’s Wappo tribe. *Intensely fruity and penetrating nose with effusive scents of ripe dark berries accented with notes of sandalwood, oak and cigar box. A rich, but smooth*

and caressing wine in the mouth, with a multilayered core of berries and a complimentary underpinning of toasty oak. The soft tannins make for easy drinkability and this wine is far more approachable than any of the three vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs from Belle Glos. This Pinot really shows off California coastal fruit, is one of the best values in California Pinot Noir on the market today, and is the best California appellation Pinot Noir bar none.



2008 Belle Glos Taylor Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$50. Aged 9 months in French oak. *Deep, dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Intensely fruity nose that improves with time in the glass revealing a perfume of crushed plums, boysenberries, oak spice and underbrush. A whiff of alcohol peaks out as the wine warms. Rustic and sinewy with flavors of black cherries, blackberries, cola, cassis, herbs and oak. The tannins are restrained and there is a good lift of acidity on the finish which shows some persistence. Good.*



2008 Belle Glos Clark & Telephone Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$50. Aged in French oak for 9 months. *Deeply colored. Lovely perfume of red and black fruits with a touch of oak spice. Earthy, briny and meaty dark fruits complimented by oak and cloaked in supple tannins. Very smoothly textured making it easy to drink. A very distinctive wine that is reflective of the Martini selection and this terroir. I am usually not a big fan of Martini selection Pinot Noirs, but this wine really delivers the goods.*

2008 Belle Glos Los Alturas Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$50. Aged 9 months in French oak. *Don’t even think about drinking this wine now unless you decant it first. Brooding aromas that take some swirling to free up. Dark fruits with hints of oak and cardamon spice. Tight in the mouth with oodles of plum and blackberry liquor essence with notes of creosol and savory herbs. Healthy tannins but soft and smooth on the palate. Gets better and better over time in the glass. Not for the timid. Very good.*



Belle Glos wines are in wide distribution. The succinct website is www.belleglos.com.

New Zealand Pinot Noir: Latest Sips are Ripe, Bold and Fruity

New Zealand Pinot Noir, like its brethren from California and Oregon, takes on many styles from delicate feminine, and charmingly nuanced wines with lower alcohol and fruit intensity at one extreme, to big, extracted, ripe, fruit-driven wines with high alcohol at the other extreme. Eric Asimov, writing about a recent tasting of New Zealand Pinot Noirs in *The New York Times* in February 2010 points out, "We all had the impression that New Zealand Pinot Noir is still seeking an identity. I say this because of the profusion of styles we found among these bottles."

I recently tasted a few New Zealand Pinot Noirs from the 2007 and 2008 vintages and found that most fell into the ripe, bold and fruity category. These wines will find fans, of course, but I believe that if this is a trend among New Zealand producers, the wines will inevitably be compared to those from California and lack a true Kiwi identity.

2008 was an excellent vintage in Central Otago and Martinborough where grapes were picked in good conditions. Marlborough was not so lucky, with rains arriving during harvest bringing the growing season to a rapid conclusion. The 2007 vintage grape harvest produced record crop levels throughout New Zealand and growers and wineries were enthusiastic about quality.

Seresin Estate produces a variety of wines from organically and biodynamically farmed estate vineyards located in Marlborough including Home Vineyard and Tatou Vineyard in Wairau Valley and Raupo Creek Vineyard in Omaka Valley. The winery and cellar door are located on the Home Vineyard property. The winery was founded in 1992 by Michael Seresin who chose the hand as the winery's logo to symbolize the mark of the artisan. Varietals produced include Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Noir. The winemaker is Clive Dougall and the estate manager is Colin Ross. The website is www.seresin.co.nz. Imported by Sorting Table, LLC, Napa, California. At this time only 25 cases of Raupo Creek and Rachel are available in the United States. 150 cases total of Sun & Moon were produced and none has been exported as yet.

A side note: New Zealand is the world's largest users of screw cap closures. The screw caps on the Seresin Estate bottles are very cool looking and as you unscrew the cap, an audible pop is produced at the end, similar to the pop heard when a cork is pulled.

All the Seresin Pinot Noirs are very dark in color with moderately firm tannins, plenty of fleshy fruit and bright acidity. They are very Caliesque in style. The fruit is de-stemmed, cold soaked, and fermentation started with wild yeast. Punch downs are done by hand daily. The wine is left on the skins for two weeks for post ferment maceration (a total of three and half weeks of skin contact). The wines are lightly pressed, barreled for natural MLF and matured in 40% new French oak for 15 months. The Sun & Moon was aged 11 months in French oak, and then blended and transferred to new oak puncheons for 6 more months. All wines were bottled unfinned and unfiltered.

2007 Seresin Raupo Creek Vineyard Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.72, screw cap, \$45. From a close-planted single vineyard in Omaka Valley with each vine thinned to one bunch per shoot. Clones 115, 777, and 10/5. *The savory nose improves over time in the glass offering scents of dark red fruits, Middle Eastern spices and oak. Dark red cherries and berries are overshadowed by tannins on the finish now. Smoothly textured with noticeable oak in the background and a citrus peel lift on the finish. Will benefit from decanting now. Good.*



2007 Seresin Rachel Limited Release Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.68, screw cap, \$60. Sourced from Raupo Creek Vineyard. Clones 115, 777 and 10/5. This Big Boy is *deep, dark and intensely fruity. Perfume of plums, blackberries, peppery spice, herbs and oak char. A fruit bomb that attacks the palate with a vengeance filling every crevice with jammy blueberry, blackberry and plum fruit. Silky with fine-grain tannins and some persistence on the fruit-filled finish. The massive fruit is pulled into line with fine acidity. Very good for this style.*



2007 Seresin Sun & Moon Marlborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.64, 70 cases, screw cap, \$150 (Est.). 80% Raupo Creek Vineyard, 20% Home Vineyard. *Terrific aromatic interest sporting dark berries especially black raspberries, and black cherries, rose tea, oak spice and vanillin. I wanted to go on sniffing it. Moderately rich and very tasty with flavors of plums, dark berries and toast. Smooth as a baby's bottom in the mouth with moderate tannins and bright acidity in perfect harmony. There is a pleasing persistence of a citrus note on the finish. The impeccable balance indicates long term aging potential.*



Felton Road Wines is located in Bannockburn, Central Otago. The latitude here is 45 degrees south, similar to the Willamette Valley of Oregon and some of the finest wine regions of France. The winery farms the original 75-acre vineyard planted in 1992 by Stewart Elms (Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling), the estate 20-acre Cornish Point Vineyard (Pinot Noir), and has a long-term lease on nearby Calvert Vineyard (Pinot Noir). All the vineyards are farmed biodynamically. The winemaker, Blair Walter, is an accomplished artisan and the Felton Road Wines are considered by many the benchmark for all of New Zealand. The website is www.feltonroad.co.nz. Imported by Wilson Daniels, St. Helena, California.

2008 Felton Road Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., screw cap, \$33. This is the flagship Pinot Noir from Felton Road. *This wine veers toward the more delicate and nuanced style rather than structural power. The fruity nose changes constantly in the glass revealing scents of black cherries, herbs, root beer, saffras, and graham. Tasty and juicy medium-bodied melange of blue and dark red fruits with a hint of cream soda. Supple tannins and bright acidity make for easy drinking. Not spectacular, but Very Good.*



2008 Felton Road Calvert Central Otago New Zealand Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., screw cap, \$58. *Darker in color than the regular blended bottling. Subdued aromas of black cherries, plum sauce and woodshed. Delicious core of black cherries and dark berries front and center with complimentary savory herbs and spice. Well-structured with a balancing edge of acidity and moderate tannins. Velvety and very sensual in the mouth. Still very young and will need some cellaring to shed and integrate the tannins.*



Craggy Range is a partnership between business man Terry Peabody and viticulturist Steve Smith, MW. Formed in 1998 with the purchase of wine growing land in Hawke's Bay, Craggy Range has since acquired several Pinot Noir vineyards in other regions including the famous Te Muna Road Vineyard in the Wairarapa region of Martinborough. The 230-acre Te Muna Road Vineyard was planted in 1999 in the Martinborough Terraces subregion of Martinborough and is largely devoted to Pinot Noir. Craggy Range specializes in single vineyard wines including about six different Pinot Noirs. The current winemaker in Martinborough is Adrian Baker who works with Steve Smith. Craggy Range is one of the high profile wineries in New Zealand that have formed a collective known as the High-End initiative aimed at promoting high end New Zealand wines in the United States. It is part of the New Zealand government's \$19 million four-year project to improve the New Zealand wine industry's profile in the United States. Imported by Korbrand Corp., New York, New York.

2008 Craggy Range Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough New Zealand Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$33. Indigenous yeast, aged over 12 months in French oak without racking. *Moderately dark in color. The nose is typical of a young wine, needing time to reveal its charms. Black cherries, spice box, cut flowers and prominent oak aromas. Intense purple fruits on the palate with hints of pine sap and oak. Smooth and sexy with a lingering finish bright with fruit. Beautifully balanced. Very good.*



tasting george pinot vertically

Regular readers of the *PinotFile* know the story of George Wine Company since I have profiled the winery several times. George Levkoff, who has an infatuation with lower case, had his wine epiphany when a friend shared a bottle of 1991 and 1992 Williams Selyem Rochioli Vineyard Pinot Noir. Four years later, George left his job as a bond trader on Wall Street, and headed west to Sonoma. He interned at Williams Selyem from 1999 to 2002, learning Burt Williams' winemaking process. He also worked later at the smaller Brogan Cellars owned by Burt's daughter, Margi. With grapes from David Hirsch's vineyard on the Sonoma Coast, he released 150 cases of his inaugural Pinot Noirs in 2003. George subsequently sourced grapes from vineyards in the Russian River Valley and his wines quickly caught the attention of top sommeliers at restaurants in Las Vegas and New York, becoming something of a cult wine. I have been a fan from the beginning.

George is practically a one-man show performing every step of winemaking, marketing and delivering. He even hand numbers the back label of every bottle. George prefers casual dress and is usually spotted in his home town of Healdsburg or on the road wearing cutoffs and sandals. He is an unpretentious and lovable guy who crafts high-collar, sophisticated Pinot noir.

George's winemaking regimen is not extraordinarily unique. He de-stems 100% of the grapes, cold soaks a few days, uses Williams Selyem yeast from Jackass Vineyard Zinfandel for inoculation, bottles only free-run juice (except in the Sonoma Coma Pinot Noir), ages in 100% new Francois Freres French oak barrels, and bottles without fining and filtration. Total annual production is less than 1,000 cases. George is pictured in blue below at Pinot Days.



I tasted a complete vertical from 2003 to 2008, labeled Vintage I to Vintage VI. Unfortunately, I have misplaced my tasting notes on Vintage I and Vintage II. I recall that Vintage I needs to be drunk up now and Vintage II was outstanding. I am sure I will run across the missing notes in the future and will add them to this feature.

The George wines typically show good consistency, admirable balance and restrained tannins. The wines are elegantly styled and approachable young. Colors and flavors trend to the redder spectrum and the wines are moderately light in color. They are made for instant gratification and are not long term agers. I have found that the George style is loved by practically everyone and when sharing a bottle with others, I have heard nothing but superlatives and the question, "Where can I get some of that?" Since Vintage II, I have never been disappointed.

George Pinot is available primarily through a mailing list with some retail distribution. Visit the website at www.georgewine.com. A listing of restaurants that carry George Pinot is available on the website. The last few years, there have been small lots of multiple vineyard-designates and a blend labeled Sonoma Coma. The Nuptial Vineyard was renamed Ceremonial Vineyard accounting for the change with Vintage V. If you have

spent any time in Healdsburg and were looking for some nightlife, you will understand the humor behind the name, Sonoma Coma.

2005 george Vintage III Nuptial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 322 cases., \$50. *Stunning nose initially featuring deep cherry aromas with a subtle whiff of clove spice. With time in the glass aromas of porto and charred wood take over. Lush tasting red cherry and berry core that picks up intensity over time in the glass. Beautifully balanced with bright acidity on the refreshing finish. Good richness and staying power. Very good.*



2006 george Vintage IV Nuptial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 324 cases, \$50. *Bright Bing cherry aromas with hints of Middle Eastern spices, cherry Life-Saver and a little good funk. Delicious essence of ripe cherries, raspberries, blueberries and cranberries. Juicy and vivid with gossamer tannins. Elegantly styled but packed with flavor.*



2007 george Vintage V Ceremonial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 324 cases, \$50. *Red fruits are underscored on the nose by scents of green pea, oak and vanillin. Dark red cherry, berry and plum flavors which demand attention. Silky in texture with a dry, fruity finish. Brimming with finesse and charm. Very good.*

2008 george Sonoma Coma Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 250 cases, \$50. *Very typical of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir displaying aromas of deep red cherries, wood shavings, sandalwood and brown spice. Generous but discrete herb-inflected and spiced cherry and raspberry fruit clothed in supple tannins. Goes down easy with a soft and smooth riff of tasty fruit. Very good (-).*



2008 george Vintage VI Maratella Vineyard & King Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 130 cases, \$50. *A blend of 50% from each vineyard. A fruity nose replete with blueberries and cherries kissed with oak. Moderately rich with tasty ripe berry flavors and a savory note. A solid wine that opens with time in the glass, showing admirable delicacy. This one will get showier over time. Good.*



2008 george Vintage VI Ceremonial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 315 cases, \$50. *A signature george Pinot. Welcoming aromas of fresh cherry cobbler, wooded forest, spice and seasoned oak. Layers of flavors including cherries, raspberries, nutmeg, white pepper, and exotic Asian spices. Rich, full and lip-smacking with impressive persistence on the back end. The fruit really grabs your attention. A cherry lollapalooza.*



Tasting Scherrer Pinot Vertically

Fred Scherrer is a winemaker's winemaker who is highly respected among his peers. He is a modest, cerebral and grounded vintner who crafts wines that reflect his personality, displaying restraint, reliability and user friendliness. His tall stature, long curly hair and full beard seem to emphasize his scholarly manner. That is not to say his wines are not exciting. Fred does have a little wild side in him as well, harboring a passion for guitars and loud rock and roll music.

Fred works out of a very modest winery facility in Sebastopol that was once an apple-picking shed. The winery is strategically isolated so he can avoid confrontation with neighbors who are not as enthusiastic about wine as he is. The absence of a sign on the gravel road leading to his winery reflects this. The added advantage of his relative isolation is that he can indulge in his music at any time of the day or night. Who knows, his music may ramp up the amplitude of his wines, adding a bit of Jimi Hendrix vibrancy.

Fred's modesty has led him to retain a low profile and he has even been accused by his followers of trying too hard not to sell his wine. It wasn't until 2005 that he succumbed to the urgings of others to replace his old label which had prominently featured the variety inside the bottle rather than the Scherrer name.

Fred cut his teeth on Pinot Noir at Dehlinger where he took over the winemaking duties for ten years, leaving in 1998 to devote his full attention to his Scherrer Winery. At Dehlinger, he developed his winemaking maxim: be patient, let the fruit speak, listen, touch lightly, watch closely, and listen again. His Pinot Noirs are never heavy-handed or manipulated. Fred acts more like a caretaker than an intruder in fashioning his wines.

Scherrer crafts both blends and vineyard-designate wines sourced from various vineyards in Sonoma County, including the Russian River Valley and the Sonoma Coast. As he has explored various vineyard sites, he has used an increasingly brutal blending selection for his various bottlings. The wines are typically de-stemmed, not crushed, fermented in simple open-top fermenters and manually punched down. They are barreled shortly after pressing and allowed to rest on their lees for 6 to 10 months before first being racked and blended. Generally, the wines receive 16 to 18 months of barrel time before bottling. The Pinot Noirs are never filtered or fined.

Production of all wines is between 6,000 and 8,000 cases annually. Fred could produce more in his winery, but refuses unless he is able to find proper vineyard sources. Such is the mindset of a true artisan.



Fred insists on holding back his wines until they are ready to drink and it is not unusual for him to have two or three vintages stored in his winery. In addition, he purposely retains a library stock of wines and releases them periodically. He currently has Pinot Noirs available dating back to 2000. As a member of the winery's mailing

list, you will be notified when library wines are made available. Fred charges a very modest premium for his library wines. Sign up on the website at www.scherrerwinery.com. Fred is one of the few wineries in California that bottles many of his Pinot Noirs in half bottles.

I recently tasted five vintages of Scherrer Pinot Noir from 2000 to 2007. Among the unifying features were impeccable balance, and admirable age ability, with the older wines showing better than the more recent vintages.

2000 Scherrer Winery Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$47.

Retains a moderately dark color. Bright aromas of black cherries, pepper, cigar box, marzipan and oak. Juicy flavors of cherries, plums, tea and a subtle note of citrus peel. Beautiful aged patina with a very smooth texture. If you like aged Pinot Noir, this is your cup of tea. Very good.



2001 Scherrer Winery Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$47.

Bouquet of forest floor, pepper and seasoned oak. Tasty essence of cherries and berries with a hint of juicy fruit and citric peel. Soft in the mouth with welcoming fruit intensity, bright acidity and very soft tannins. Very good.



2003 Scherrer Winery Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$47. *Opens beautifully in the glass over time revealing aromas of Bing cherries, baking spices and toast. Delicate core of dark red cherry and berry fruit with a toasty oak overlay. A demure wine with supple tannins and an appealing velvety texture. Good.*

2006 Scherrer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$40. *Darker fruits are featured in this wine with scents of blackberry jam, dark chocolate, pears and oak. Ripe black cherry essence with a riff of roasted nuts and a grip of grapefruit peel on the finish. Tannins are fine-grain and restrained. Good.*

 **2007 Scherrer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$40. *Shy nose sporting Bing cherries, spice and smoky oak. Gorgeous core of fruit including cherries, boysenberries and plums with a faint note of citrus peel in the background, wrapped in ripe, dry tannins and kissed by oak. The fruit has plenty of pop and pizzazz and although this wine is very good now, it will be stunning in another five years if you have patience.*



Loring Wine Company: The Sample Pack

This was a new one for me. Brian Loring of Loring Wine Company (LWC) recently sent out an offering for a Sample Pack of three of his 2008 single vineyard Pinot Noirs for \$59.97 (that's less than \$20 a bottle). The promo from Brian and Kimberley Loring included an astonishing admission and read as follows: "We'd been at the forefront of the 'bigger is better' wave, trying to see just how freakin' massive and ripe we could get Pinot Noir. It was an exciting ride, but we lost some of you along the way. We've learned a lot since then and refined what we do, it's almost as if we're new again. As a mini thank you for the support, we're offering you the opportunity to taste what we're doing now and see how we've evolved." I had been one of those who lost interest along the way and thought I should take Brian up on this offer and revisit his latest wines. The following three wines were sampled this week. You can get your own Sample Pack at www.loringwinecompany.com if you are a mailing list member. Otherwise, you might try asking.

2008 Loring Wine Company Keefer Ranch Vineyard Green Valley Pinot Noir

15.1% alc., screw cap. *Aromas of black cherries, huckleberries, baking spices, oak and a whiff of alcohol. Intense purple fruits with a big acid spine. Fruit-driven but not jammy with a silky mouth feel. Develops interest in the glass over time. Tasted the next day from a previously opened and re-screwed bottle the aromas and flavors had become raisiny. Good, but drink up now.*



2008 Loring Wine Company Aubaine Vineyard San Luis Obispo Pinot Noir

14.9% alc., screw cap. *Very dark purple color in the glass. Aromas of oak toast, plum sauce, soy and cigar box. Purple fruit driven with reigned-in tannins creating a velvety texture. Very easy to drink with admirable balance of fruit, tannin and acidity. The next day from a previously opened and re-screwed bottle the wine had taken on a porty, cooked character. This wine will have many fans, but drink it now. Good*



2008 Loring Wine Company Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir

14.7% alc., screw cap. *Locked up like a tight chastity belt. The nose offers little fruit but plenty of oak. Lovely plum core is brooding and overwhelmed by oak and tannin. Very smooth in the mouth with admirable persistence on the finish. Potential here if the oak integrates more over time. More expressive the next day from a previously opened and re-screwed bottle indicating short-term cellaring will be rewarded. Good.*



There is definitely a refinement in the wines from Loring Wine Company in this vintage. The oak has been lightened a bit, the jammy extraction is a thing of the past, the tannins are more reserved, and the wines have a more gentle and charming mouth feel. That said, they remain linear, fruit-driven Pinot Noirs with high alcohol and very ripe flavors that will not reward cellaring.

Party Whites

I am strictly a Pinot Noir specialist who also likes and reviews Chardonnay, but also reviews a number of interesting white wines that are submitted to me when I have time. Recently, I received three white wines under the Mandolina label from Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards and Winery in the Santa Ynez Valley. Mandolina wines are Cal-Ital varietals, inexpensively priced, that are perfect for casual drinking and partying. The labels and packaging send a message that wine is fun and readily enjoyable. The following three wines are from the 2009 vintage and have yet to be released, but worth a look for summer entertaining and outdoor dining. With low alcohols, the wines are perfect when chilled and offered as an aperitif or as a compliment to light summer fare. Check in periodically at the website of Lucas & Lewellen at www.lwv.com for availability. The winemaker is Megen McGrath.

2009 mandolina Santa Barbara County Malvasia Bianca 12.7% alc.. Off-dry style. *Aromas of dried hay and nori. Subtle white peach flavors with a slight sweetness. A neutral, neutered wine that is refreshing but lacks interest. Decent.*

2009 mandolina Santa Barbara County Moscato 12.4% alc.. Sourced from orange muscat grapes. Slight residual sugar. *Appealing aromas of orange tea and orange flower water with a hint of hay and clove. Respectable richness on the palate of orange marmalade, orange tea, and spice flavors that are slightly sweet. Clean and refreshing on the finish. Good.*



2009 mandolina Santa Barbara County Muscat Canelli 10.1% alc.. Italian muscat grape that is used in still and sparkling wines. Sourced from the winery's Los Alamos Vineyard. *The nose starts off with spices, cucumber, sawdust and hay, developing interest over time with more fruit including peaches and stewed apples, as well as floral lilac. Dry and tasty with juicy flavors of guava, linalool and passion fruit that linger on the finish. Would be great with prosciutto-wrapped melon. A big plus is that you can enjoy a few glasses of this without getting sideways. Very good.*



Small Sips of Pinot



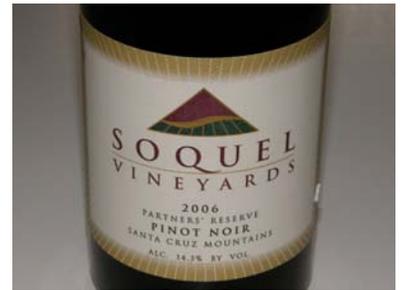
2007 Kendric Vineyards Marin County Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 368 cases, \$34. Fourth vintage. *Moderately in color. Lovely perfume of earth-dusted cherries, lavender and pear. Delicious cherry fruit with a sidecar of sandalwood, oak and root beer. Medium-bodied with suede tannins and understated acidity. This wine has pinotosity. Less acidity than the 2006 vintage version with more cajones and the best yet from this small producer. Definitely worth a look. Very good.*

Available on the website at www.kendricvineyards.com.



2006 Soquel Vineyards Partner's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$20. A small winery with a low profile that sells most of its wine to locals. A partnership between Peter and Paul Bargetto and Jon Morgan. The wines tend to be full-bodied in a bolder style. The 2007 vintage wines won several Gold Medals at the 2010 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. *Restrained aromas but appealing ripe black cherry and raspberry scents*

complimented by savory oak. Fully ripe core of stone fruits and black currants. A moderately rich and intense fruit-driven wine with supple tannins. Not a bashful wine but drinks easy. Very good. Other wines available on the website at www.soquelvineyards.com (this wine available from klwines.com).



2008 Castalia Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.1% alc., \$50. So your not on the coveted Rochioli mailing list and you want some Rochioli wine. Look no further. Terry Bering, the long time Cellar Master at Rochioli, crafts superb Pinot Noirs from Rochioli fruit that you can actually buy. I have raved about the last few vintages in past issues. This is a no-brainer my friend. *The nose entices with fresh aromas of cherries and berries with a hint of brier patch and baking spice. Moderate in weight, this wine flaunts a delicious core of redder fruits with underpinnings of bread crust and spice. Flawless and harmonious, this silky beauty really shows off its breeding. A sophisticated wine with a top hat personality* Available at www.castaliawines.com.



2007 De La Montanya Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 74 cases, \$50. Aged in 50% new French oak. *Penetrating and vibrant aromas of Bing cherries, summer herbs and oak. Flavorful and mouth coating cherry essence with reserved tannins and noticeable persistence on the fruity finish. Still sporting plenty of oak which shows up on the finish over time. Good, but over oaked for me.*

2007 Cherry Pie Huckleberry Snodgrass Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$50. Great label! The winemaker behind Hundred Acre and Layer Cake, Jayson Woodbridge, has joined the crusade for the perfect Pinot Noir. Also available is a Stanly Ranch Pinot Noir. *Beautifully scented black raspberry, Bing cherry fruit augmented with oak and spice. Juicy and succulent red cherries fill the mid palate leading to a dry and lingering finish highlighted by subtle oak char. The tannins are fine-grained and the overall impression is seductive. Very good.*



2007 32 Winds Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$36. A new wine company created by Jim Chaffin, Jim Light and David Wilhelm, partners in the Roaring Fork Club and Sonoma County's Mayacama Club. The CEO of 32 Winds Wine is Steve Humble, director of wine for Colordao's Roaring Fork Club. A blend of 70% Hirsch and 30% Keefer Ranch fruit. The winemaker is Ehren Jordan (Failla). *Shy aromas require plenty of swirling to bring the blueberry and cherry fruit out from under the cloak of oak and pine. Darker, savory stone fruits and berries with the emphasis on savory. Supple tannins surround the fruit. Decent without being special.*



2008 Melville Estate Verna's Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$20. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Fruity and confected nose of red cherries, hard candy, and lavender. Pleasing dried cherry, strawberry and cranberry fruits smoothly textured with a short finish. Moderately light and simple with bright acidity on the finish. Good.*



2007 W.H. Smith Maritime Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$44. *Herbal oak dominates the aromas and carries over in the flavor profile background. Medium weighted dark red fruits with a wild and feral character backed by savory herbs. Smooth in the mouth. Good without being special.*

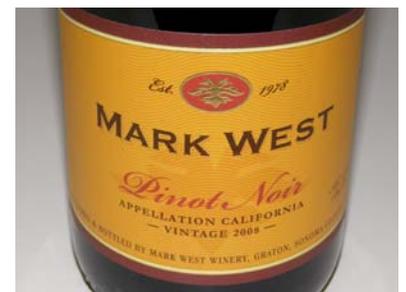


2007 Etude Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$30. *Nuanced aromatic profile showing baked plum, toasty bread, leather jacket and a little smoke. Typical Carneros flavor profile of dark stone fruits, cassis and earth. Decent intensity, and soft and smooth on the palate. The wine grows on you a bit over time in the glass, and I had no complaints, but no superlatives either. Good.*

2008 Eric Kent Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$35. The artist, Mike Shine, is on the label. *Aromas of cherries, anise, spice, eucalyptus and oak with a hint of alcohol. The nose is quite funky initially but responds to air and swirling. Tasty light flavors of Bing cherries and strawberries with a sidecar of baking spices and red hard candy. Fruit flavors veer to the ripe side, persisting on the fruity finish. Good.*



2008 Mark West California Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.76. \$10. 51% Central Coast, 27% North Coast, 22% other. Fermented in small tanks with daily punch downs, pressed lightly and aged in 100% French oak (medium and heavy toast) for 8 months. Alex Cose is the winemaker producing this singular wine which has received accolades for consistency and reliability in the under \$20 category for the last several years. *Moderately deep color. A fruity nose that draws interest initially with notes of black cherries, berries and spice. Over time the wine shed some of its fruity charm, revealing aromas of mint and pine pitch. An easy drinking wine sporting composite flavors of black cherries, strawberries and boysenberries with some oak influence, a slight green note, and soft fine-grain tannins. On the lighter side and rather simple, but true to the varietal. Not a connoisseurs wine, but works as a daily drinker. Decent.*



2008 Loos Family Bohemian Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 25 cases, \$40. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged in 50% new and 50% neutral French oak. The winemaker is Chris Nelson. *Scents of cranberries, cherries, herbs and allspice becoming a little minty over time. Darker fruits clothed in dusty tannins. Notes of underbrush and savory herbs add interest. Very smooth and creamy on the palate. Goes down easy. Good.*



2007 Kingston Family Vineyards Alazan Casablanca Valley Chile Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$30. Carl John Kingston came to Chile in the early 1900s looking for gold and five generations later, his decedents still farm family vineyards in the Casablanca Valley. The name, Alazan, is inspired by a favorite family horse from years past. The consulting winemaker is Byron Kosuge. *Deeply colored in the glass. The nose is somewhat strange offering no fruit but plenty of smoke, cigar, and oiled wood aromas. The palate is a different story all together. Luscious core of blue and black berry fruit with smoke and grilled meat in the background. Nicely proportioned tannins and acidity with a satiny texture and a pleasing riff of citrus on the clean finish. Love the taste of this wine and worth a look for its uniqueness. Very good.*



The Robert Stemmler Pinot Noirs reviewed below are newly released. The winegrower is Anne Moller-Racke of The Donum Estate and the winemaker is Kenneth Juhasz. These are solid, well-crafted Pinot Noirs you can put on the dinner table and be proud of.

2007 Robert Stemmler Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.70, 3,500 cases, \$36. The label is inspired by *Le Vendange*, a 14th century tapestry displayed in the Cluny Museum in France. Represents every part of the Donum Ranch including Dijon, Martini, Roederer, Calera, Hanzell and Swan selections planted in 1989-1990. 100% de-stemmed, native fermentation and Burgundian yeast isolate inoculation. Aged in 40% new French oak. *Lovely aromas of red fruits, lemon cola, cherry cobbler and mint. Primarily red-fruited with a note of chocolate-filled brioche. On the light side with a good spark of acidity on the short finish. Good.*



2007 Robert Stemmler Nugent Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.65, 1,100 cases, \$40. 11-acre tightly spaced vineyard planted in 1997 to Dijon clones 115 and 667. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 45% new French oak. *The nose is filled with very ripe cherry fruits complimented by Provencal herbs and oak. The black cherry and plum core falls just short of overripeness. A hint of oak, tea and fig adds interest. Nicely crafted and silky textured with a satisfying finish. Good.*

2007 Robert Stemmler Ferguson Block Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.52, \$44. From the oldest portion of the Donum Estate planted in 1974 to Martini selection on St. George rootstock. Yields are one tone per acre. 100% de-stemmed, native fermentation and Burgundian yeast isolate inoculation. Aged 11 months in 35% new, tight-grain French oak. *Distinctive aromas of cassis, rose petals, green bean, tar and compost bin. Rustic and earthy with a heart of black currants and creme de cassis. Silky smooth with balancing tannins and bright acidity on the finish. Takes on more charm with time in the glass but remains a man's wine. Good.*



IPNC Celebrates The Art of Pairing Pinot

I figured out early on that Pinot Noir was the greatest food wine on the planet. Pinot Noir is the natural partner for foods from the sea (salmon, ahi), the air (quail), the water (duck), and the earth (venison, lamb, beef, pork). Pinot Noir is made for drinking with food and when you have the perfect match, the experience can bring you to your knees. Seductive, elegant and earthy Pinot Noir unites friends, food and a good time into a glorious dining experience.

The theme of the 2010 24th International Pinot Noir Celebration is “Wine is Food: The Art of Pairing Pinot.” Ray Isle, Wine Editor of *Food & Wine*, and James Beard Award nominee, will be the Master of Ceremonies. Over the three day weekend, wines from more than sixty of the top Pinot Noir producers in the world will be matched up with the cooking of nearly fifty guest northwest chefs. The keynote seminar will feature four Pinot Noir wines made by Dan Goldfield of California’s Dutton Goldfield, Lynnette Hudson of New Zealand’s Pegasus Bay, Olivier Lerich of Burgundy’s Domaine De L’Arlot, and Mark Vlossak of Oregon’s St. Innocent Winery. Each winemaker will discuss the vineyard practices and vinification methods of their respective wineries and comment on how each is influenced by food.

The second part of the seminar titled “Daring Pairings” will be led by Master Sommelier and *Perfect Pairings* author Evan Goldstein who will be joined by celebrated northwest chefs Renee Erickson of Seattle’s The Boat Street Cafe, Kevin Gibson of Portland’s Evoc, Jason Stoller Smith of the Willamette Valley’s The Dundee Bistro, and Cathy Whims of Portland’s Nostrana. Each chef will create and discuss a pairing for one of the four Pinot Noirs using a different cut of lamb, identifying how they create complimentary recipes to allow both wine and food to shine.

The IPNC is famous for its alfresco lunches, Grand Dinner and Northwest Salmon Bake, making this event as much a celebration of northwest food bounty as Pinot Noir. The chefs team up with northwest farmers to transform locally sourced, sustainable ingredients into edible art. Photos and biographies of all guest chefs as well as speakers and winemakers can be viewed at www.ipnc.org.



This year’s IPNC featured wineries may be viewed at www.ipnc.org/wineries.php. Participating wineries are represented from North America, Europe and the Southern Hemisphere. Unique to the IPNC is the enthusiastic involvement of Burgundians including this year Maison Ambroise, Domaine De L’Arlot, Domaine Ballorin & F, Domaine David Clark, Domaine Jean-Jacques Confuron, Domaine Humbert Frères, and Domaine Jean-René Nudant. Still more have yet to be announced.

The IPNC benefits ¡Salud! Oregon’s Pinot Noir Auction which provides healthcare for the vineyard workers of Oregon. This year’s ¡Salud! Auction is November 12 and 13.

Having attended several IPNCs, I can say without reservation it is truly Pinot Noirvana. Sign up today! The dates are July 23-25, 2010. The cost is \$975 for the full weekend. Register online at www.ipnc.org. Plan to stay on the campus of Linfield College for the full experience.

Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival

Once a year in May, Anderson Valley opens its arms to Pinot aficionados and stages its annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival. 2010 will mark the 13th Festival which began informally with winery open houses and was formalized into a Festival in 1997. The casual, intimate event has increased in popularity in step with the meteoric rise in quality of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir over the last several years. Last year's celebration of Pinot Noir was sold out with over 700 people in attendance. Held the third weekend in May (May 13-16 this year), the Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival is sponsored by the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association.

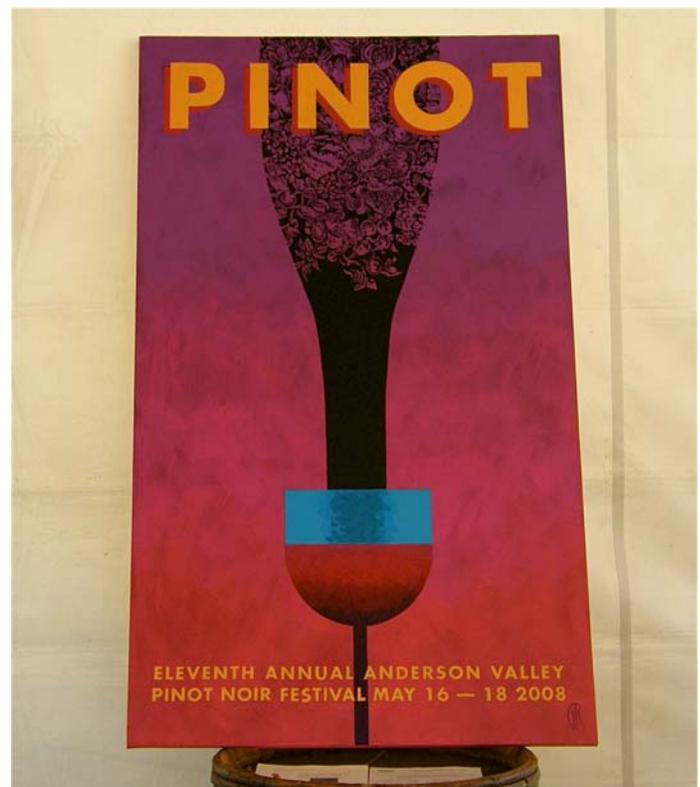
The Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival is one of my favorite annual Pinot Noir events. Each year I look forward to attending, attracted by the country fair atmosphere, the delectable local artisan foods, the warmth and passion of the local winegrowers and winemakers, the cheerful organizers, and the superb Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs which are world-class.

On Friday the event kicks off with a Technical Conference and luncheon at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds in Boonville. Don't be scared off by the title, as the talks have appeal to anyone interested in wine. The Conference is followed by a casual BBQ at Standish Wine Co. in Philo. Saturday's Pinot Noir Grand Tasting is the centerpiece of the weekend's activities with forty wineries participating. Held in a large tent on the grounds of Goldeneye Estate, there is music, food, an auction and plenty of great Pinot. In the evening, Winemaker Dinners are held both in the Valley and in Mendocino (check the website at www.avwines.com for a listing). On Sunday, wineries hold Open Houses. Many of Anderson Valley's wineries are small and do not have tasting rooms so this is a unique opportunity to visit. A list of Open Houses is also on the event's website.

If you haven't made lodging arrangements realize that there is very little lodging infrastructure in the Anderson Valley. However, there are plenty of very comfortable lodging options on the Mendocino Coast which is a short and picturesque 40 minute drive through the redwoods from Anderson Valley.

Guys can leave their Ralph Lauren polo shirts and designer jeans at home and women should forget the Jessica McClintock bag and diamond jewelry, this is a wine country event with no pretentiousness.

Kristy Charles is the very capable Executive Director of the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association and she can answer any inquires you may have. You can contact here at 707-895-9463 or by e-mail at kristy@avwines.com.



Pinot Briefs

Mat Gustafson is New Winemaker at Moshin Vineyards Mat Gustafson (winemaker for Dutton Estate and Paul Mathew) will work alongside winemaker and proprietor Rick Moshin of Moshin Vineyards located on Westside Road in the Russian River Valley. Mat will also assist with the management of 28 acres of sustainably farmed grapes that are owned and/or managed by Moshin Vineyards. In addition, he will provide grower relations for Moshin contracted growers that provide Moshin Vineyards with premium grapes from the Sonoma Coast, Russian River Valley and Dry Creek appellations. Moshin Vineyards has the only 4-tier gravity flow winery in the Russian River Valley. The Moshin Vineyards brand was established in 1989 by then San Jose State math instructor Rick Moshin and his family who later built the winery on Westside Road in Healdsburg in 2005. Moshin, despite its prime vineyard holdings and modern winery, has never reached the top tier of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir producers and this hiring should push the winery to greater heights.

North American Wineries Now Top 7,000 According to a report in *Wines & Vines* (April 12, 2010), the total number of wineries in North America has increased by 361 in less than one year and now there are a total of 7,011 bonded and virtual wineries in the United States, Canada and Mexico with 6,589 in the United States alone. California is still the home of the most new winery ventures, adding 68 since July 2009 and a total of 670 during the past five years. California now has a total of 3,115 wineries, Washington is second with 593, and Oregon is third with 502. 94% of all wineries in North America produce less than 30,000 cases per year. The remaining 6% produce 93% of all wine by volume.

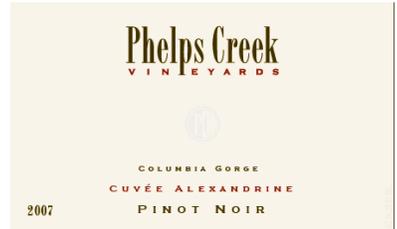
Tyler Florence Sets Sights on Bay Area Empire TV chef, cookbook author and recently a featured chef at Pigs & Pinot in Healdsburg, is opening a rotisserie restaurant in the Riverfront Development in Napa called Tyler Florence's Rotisserie and Wine and another restaurant in Mill Valley where he has the Tyler Florence Shop and currently lives. A third restaurant, Wayfare Tavern, is opening in San Francisco's Financial District in the former Rubicon space. He is also producing a Pinot Noir under the TF label with the first release from Split Rock Vineyard (Gap's Crown Vineyard) in the Sonoma Coast in the 2008 vintage. Visit www.tylerflorence.com.



Speakeasy Wine Club Opens A speakeasy style wine bar in Healdsburg, Prohibition, features hard-to-find boutique wines. Richard and Kae Rosenberg of Healdsburg's Grape Leaf Inn have opened a 30-seat wine bar paying homage to its namesake era with a clandestine entrance. Located at the corner of Healdsburg Avenue and North Street, just off the historic town plaza, the shop displays unusual wine related items that are available for purchase. Exclusive producers such as Williams Selyem, Dehlinger, George Wine Company and others will be among the small-lot allocated wines offered on the Prohibition wine list. The Rosenbergs have operated the Prohibition concept for years at the Grape Leaf Inn, where overnight guests are invited to visit the property's speakeasy and wine cellar, accessed through a secret door disguised as a bookcase. Open 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM (this is Healdsburg after all) daily. Visit the website at www.speakeasywineclub.com.

"Highlands Fling" Celebration in the Santa Lucia Highlands The Wine Artisans of the Santa Lucia Highlands, an alliance of the appellation's winegrowers and wineries, will host the 4th annual Gala Tasting on May 15 at Hahn Estates from 2:00 to 5:00 PM. The celebration will offer strolling wine tasting on the grounds of the scenic Hahn property, with dramatic views of the Salinas Valley below. Participating wineries include August West, Belle Glos, Boekenooogen, Cru, Hahn, Hope & Grace, La Rochelle, Lucienne, Manzoni, Martin Alfaro, McIntyre, Mer Soleil, Morgan, Novy, Paraiso, Pelerin, Pessagno, Pey-Lucia, Pisoni, Puma Road, Roar, Sequana, Siduri, Talbott, Testarossa, Tondre, Tudor and Wrath. Tickets are \$85 per person and can be purchased online at www.santaluciahighlands.com.

Another Burgundian Partnership in Oregon Now in its third year, French winemaker Roy works side by side with resident winemaker Rich Cushman of Phelps Creek Vineyards in Hood River. The two winemakers pick their grapes separately and vinify their wines in their own fashion. Roy spends much of the year in Gevrey-Chambertain where she crafts wine for her father's label, Domaine Marc Roy. Phelps Creek offers a rare opportunity to taste two different Pinot Noirs made from the same vineyard under one roof by a Burgundian and American winemaker. The 2008 Cuvée Alexandrine Columbia Gorge Pinot Noir (122 cases, \$42) is newly released. Visit www.phelpscreekvineyards.com.

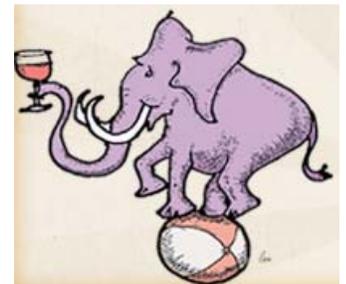


Schug Carneros Estate Winery Announces 30th Anniversary Walter Schug, who first established his reputation as winemaker for Joseph Phelps Vineyards and made California's first proprietary Bordeaux-style blend, marks the 30th anniversary of his eponymous winery this year. To celebrate, the winery will release a special estate grown Pinot Noir this holiday season and will break ground on a solar array to produce 100% of the winery's electricity needs. Early on, Walter Schug recognized the Carneros region's suitability for cool climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in which the winery specializes. Beyond its 42-acre estate vineyards, the winery sources grapes from several of Sonoma County's premier wine grape growers. In 1995, Sonoma-born winemaker Michael Cox joined Schug as assistant winemaker. Trained in enology at University of California at Davis, Cox was promoted to winemaker in 1996, a position he has held to the present. Walter holds the title of Winemaster Emeritus and uses his experience to guide the winemaking team. For more information, visit www.schugwinery.com.

French Vineyards Promote Nonalcoholic Health Drinks French viticulturists are trying to profit from the studies that have shown health benefits from wine. Vineyard profits are declining in France as alcohol consumption is on the decline. Producers are now making medicines and supplements from grape seed and grape skin extracts containing a high concentration of polyphenols. They are even considering using polyphenols as a health additive in soft drinks and yogurt. Didier Hauret, owner of Le Clos du Grand Rio in the Loire Valley, is producing a drink called Dionysox which is made from the skins and other grape residue and sold as a dietary supplement. The problem with the potential benefits of these products is, many studies indicate that the alcohol is necessary to give the full health benefit of polyphenols.

Have a Laugh One of the funniest bits of wine writing I have ever read was published in the *Oregon Wine Press* recently (April 2010). Riggs Fulmer, a Portland-based wine writer and musician, penned an article titled, "Tasting Fool," as the publication's annual April Fools joke story. The author interviewed Tammy Remark, a so-called writer for the *Wine Speculator*, who said, "I'm sick and tired of Pinot Noir being treated like some shrinking violet. When did it ever come into vogue to produce wines you can see through.....Delicacy is for toilet paper.....I mean, if you want something clear to drink, there's always Gatorade. Wine should be powerful, muscular and dark.....You have winemakers out here like Jason Lett, Ken Cancilla, and Kelley Fox. Hacks! These little baby wines they produce are fit only for reduction sauces. If I wanted to smell rose petals in my wine I would dump in a bottle of perfume!" I could go on, but you get the idea. Check it out online at www.oregonwinepress.com.

Claypool Cellars World-renowned musician Les Claypool of the alternate rock band Primus is the man behind Claypool Cellars along with partners Jay Meyer and Slawek Michalak. Claypool originally intended to make wine for himself and friends, but his first wine was really good, and the next thing he knew he was in the wine business. About 500 cases of Purple Pachyderm Pinot Noir (a name linked to the Primus song, "Southbound Pachyderm") Pinot were produced at Vinify Wine Services in Santa Rosa. Grapes are sourced from the Hurst Vineyard in the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed of the Russian River Valley. The first release was from the 2007 vintage and was crafted by winemaker Shad Chappell. A 2008 Hurst Vineyard single vineyard wine is planned and a Rosé (Pink Platypus) is also produced. The 2007 vintage of Pinot Noir, which I have not tried, is sold out. Join the mailing list at www.claypoolcellars.com.



Over the years I have accumulated quite a collection of recipes that pair beautifully with Pinot Noir or use Pinot Noir in the preparation. I have personally tried each one of the recommended recipes and would like to share a recipe with you periodically in the *PinotFile*. I call the feature, "Cooking For Pinot"

Cooking For Pinot

This recipe comes from Amar Santana, Executive Chef of Charlie Palmer at Bloomingdales, South Coast Plaza, Orange County, California. It is part of Charlie Palmer's Kitchen Technique Cooking Series.

Prosciutto Wrapped Ahi Tuna Loin, Parsnip Puree, Candied Kumquats, Pinot Noir Star Anise Reduction

Prosciutto Wrapped Tuna Loin

2 6 oz pieces of Ahi tuna
4 slices of thinly sliced Parma ham

Method: Thinly slice Parma ham. Lay ham flat on surface and wrap Ahi tuna tightly. In a hot pan, saute prosciutto wrapped tuna loin on all sides until crisp.

Parsnip Puree

8 oz of parsnip, peeled and chopped
1 garlic clove smashed
Salt and pepper to taste

Method: In a stainless steel pot combine parsnip, garlic and cream, cover and cook for 20 minutes at low heat. Transfer to a blender and puree until smooth.

Candied Kumquats

8 oz sliced kumquats
1 cup sugar
1.5 cup water
2 star anise
1 cinnamon stick

Method: Combine all ingredients and bring to a boil and then cool down to room temperature.

Pinot Noir Reduction

4 cups Pinot Noir
1 thyme sprig
2 shallots
2 garlic cloves
3 star anise
4 oz butter

Method: In a stainless steel pan reduce wine with all the ingredients except the butter. Reduce until almost dry. Whisk in the butter a small amount at a time, then when all the butter is emulsified, strain and keep warm.