

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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IN THE MARKET

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My Local Wine Bar...

“WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME...” Remember that classic theme song from the television show “Cheers”? It was a great song from a great show. It described that place where you always felt welcome and where you could enjoy a break from the real world with your favorite beverage.

When I moved to the town of Sonoma from San Francisco about 18 years ago I went from having several places in my Marina District neighborhood or near my Civic Center office that fit that description to a town where I really had nowhere to go. The town of Sonoma (at that time and now) has some fine bars and some terrific restaurants, and some of the restaurants, like the **Carneros Bistro under sommelier Christopher Sawyer’s guidance**, have really creatively ramped up their wine programs, but up until just recently, there wasn’t a bar for miles around that really had a wine focus—a place where you could sit and sip a wide variety of wines from around the world at your leisure and in the company of friends. (As an aside, I consider restaurant lounges to be different—they are usually centered around serving people who are waiting for tables.)

Well, all that changed last year when my favorite place to drink my favorite beverage opened up just a half block off the Sonoma Plaza **right next door to my favorite restaurant.**

Enoteca Della Santina is the brainchild of and joint venture between wine sales veteran **Ron Kantor** and **Robert Della Santina**, owner (with his family) of **Della Santina’s Trattoria** located next door (the wine bar is also known as Enoteca Next Door). There are so many reasons why I love this place. **Ron and Robert have done an incredible job of creating a cozy, comfortable wine bar** in the ground floor of a historic building. The space has previously been home to a cheese shop and a really great bookstore (Readers Books, now across the street in larger quarters).

Walking in the door at Enoteca Della Santina, you enter an intimate, warm space. On your left is the bar (about 10 seats) extending most of the length of the space. There is a small alcove in the back with a high rise glass table and seats. On your right is a beautiful stone wall with floor-to-ceiling metal wine racks—literally a wall of wine.

[Continued on next page]



WINNER

James Beard Award For
Newsletter Writing On Food,
Beverage, Restaurants
and Nutrition

OUT IN PINOT COUNTRY

[Continued from previous page]

You sit down at the bar and are presented with two lists: the by-the-glass list (about 30 selections) and the retail bottle list (about 150 selections). To say that it's an eclectic selection is an understatement—both lists do a great job in giving you a broad range of choices from around the world, **but it's the quality of the selections that really make it a list of 150 killer wines. The Pinot selection is equally special.**

So far, so good. Great selection, cool, intimate setting, friendly people. **The icing on the cake:** wine prices on the bottle list are retail prices. **Retail.**

To give you an example of pricing and selection, here is a snapshot of Enoteca Della Santina's **California and Oregon Pinot offerings** culled from a recent visit (listed alphabetically):

- Auteur Ophelia 2006, \$38
- Broadley Willamette Valley 2006, \$28
- Brick House Willamette Valley Le Dijonnaise 2006, \$59
- Buena Vista Carneros Clone 828 2005, \$40
- De Ponte Willamette Valley 2006, \$38
- Lemelson Willamette Valley Thea's Selection 2006, \$39
- Lucienne Santa Lucia Highlands Lone Oak 2005, \$49
- Paul Hobbs Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2005, \$70
- Roessler Cellars Sonoma Coast La Brisa 2006, \$30
- Shea Wine Cellars East Hill 2006, \$52.
- Shea Wine Cellars Pommard Clone 2006, \$52.
- Sojourn Cellars Sonoma Coast 2007, \$39

I'd be happy with any of those wines and at those prices, it's a no-brainer to bring a friend, grab a bottle off the wall, sit at the bar and enjoy. The only thing missing is some food. You can get a cheese or charcuterie plate if you just want to nosh, or, you can order great food (Sunday through Thursday only) from a limited bar menu provided by **Della Santina's Trattoria** next door.

Before I share the menu, here's a quick word about **Della Santina's Trattoria**. The restaurant was founded in 1990 by **Quirico (Dan) Della Santina and his wife Shirley**. Their son **Robert Della Santina** joined the business in 1991. The menu is based on Della Santina family recipes from Lucca, Italy. The focus is on great homemade pastas, delicious rotisserie meats (chicken, pork, rabbit, duck and turkey) prepared in a traditional Tuscan style as well as fresh seafood. The restaurant has a different wine list than the wine bar (due to California alcohol beverage control regulations, as well as

the the different ownership of the two businesses) with an equally great balance of new and old world selections. The restaurant and wine bar collaborate on special events and offer a wine club. OK, back to the bar menu:

Tonnato di Maiale

Thinly sliced loin of pork topped with tuna-caper sauce served over mixed greens

Minestrone

Traditional Tuscan vegetable soup drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil

Tardelli Con Funghi

Meat and spinach filled pasta with domestic, oyster and shiitake mushrooms in a light wine reduction sauce

Cannelloni Bolognese

Chicken, free-range veal and ricotta filled crepes topped with a light bechamel sauce and served over a traditional Bolognese sauce

Gnocchi Della Nonna

Traditional Tuscan pasta made from potato finished in a light tomato-basil sauce

Spiedini Misti

Combination of rotisserie free-range chicken, loin of pork and Petaluma duck served with seasonal vegetables and roasted baby potatoes.

As far as I'm concerned, Ron and Robert have really knocked it out of the park with Enoteca Della Santina. I'd urge you to stop on by the next time you're in the town of Sonoma—who knows, maybe I'll see you there. **After all, it is my local wine bar.** And don't forget about Della Santina's Trattoria next door!

Enoteca Della Santina

127 East Napa Street, Sonoma, CA 95476. **Information:** 707-938-4200, www.enotecadellasantina.com. **Hours:** Monday-Tuesday, Thursday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Sunday, 12 noon to 10 p.m.; closed Wednesday.

Recent News

Domaine Alfred Now Chamisal Vineyards

Crimson Wine Group, the Napa Valley-based wine company that acquired the **Domaine Alfred** brand, winery and vineyard in August 2008 announced that it will re-launch the brand under the estate vineyard's original name, **Chamisal**

OUT IN PINOT COUNTRY

Vineyards, according to Crimson President and CEO **Erle Martin**.

The Chamisal Vineyard was first planted in **Edna Valley** in 1973 and has a long history of terrific wines. Replanted in the early 1990s to mainly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, wines from the vineyard were produced by then owner **Terry Speizer** under the Domaine Alfred brand from 1996 to 2008. The 2007 vintage will be the first wines to carry the new label.

Crimson Wine Group also owns **Pine Ridge Winery** in Napa Valley and **Archery Summit Winery** in Oregon's Dundee Hills.

Upcoming Events

Pinot Posse Tour IV

March 16-20, 2009. The **Pinot Posse**, a self-named band of seven top Pinot producers, are headed out on their annual series of tasting dinners in Colorado. The Pinot Posse is **Dan Kosta, Kosta Browne; David O'Reilly, Owen Roe; Peter Cargasacchi, Point Concepcion Cargasacchi Vineyards; Brian Loring, Loring Wine Company; Andrew Vingiello, AP Vin; Ed Kurtzman, August West; and Jim Prosser, JK Carriere**. Information: visit www.pinotposse.com.

Pinot Paradise

March 28-29, 2009. The fifth annual **Pinot Paradise, a Celebration of Pinot Noir from the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA**, will be held Saturday and Sunday, March 28 and 29. This year's program includes the following events: Pathway to Pinot Paradise: Saturday, March 28, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., participating wineries open their cellars for barrel tastings. Technical Session: Sunday, March 29, 9 a.m. to 12 noon at Villa Ragusa in downtown Campbell, featuring clonal tastings and presentations by local winemakers and vineyard managers. Grand Cruz Tasting: Sunday, March 29, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Villa Ragusa, taste the finest Pinots from more than 30 local wineries. Information: visit www.scmwa.com.

Pinnacles Wine Festival

April 25, 2009. The **Pinnacles Wine Festival**, while not specifically a Pinot event, is nonetheless one that you should not miss. In its sixth year, the event is held and hosted by the **Inn at the Pinnacles** located in the heart of the **Chalone**

AVA. It's a great event, small and intimate, with wines from all producers who source grapes from the Chalone AVA, and food from some of Monterey County's best restaurants. Information: visit www.pinnacleswinefestival.com.

Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival

May 15-17, 2009. Because of its small size and focus on a single region, the **Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival** is a great opportunity to taste, talk about and understand why **Anderson Valley** Pinots are getting more attention these days. The three-day event begins on Friday with an all-day Pinot Noir technical conference (open to the public) and then a main event consumer tasting on Saturday. The third day is a free-form day of winery open houses around the Anderson Valley. Information: visit www.avwines.com.

Santa Lucia Highlands Winegrowers' Gala

May 16, 2009. Join the vintners of the **Santa Lucia Highlands** for this third annual tasting of limited release and hard-to-get vintages, offered by the winemakers themselves and paired to elegant hors d'oeuvres. Held at **Hahn Estates**; more than 20 area producers are scheduled to pour their wines. Information: visit www.santaluciahighlands.com.

In This Issue

This issue is filled with some really great Pinots from Pinot veterans such as **Chehalem, DuNah, Elk Cove, MacRostie, Panther Creek** and **TAZ Vineyards**, as well as some newcomers to **PinotReport: Foursight, Saxon Brown and Vista Hills**.

By the time you read this, I will be on my way to the annual **World of Pinot Noir** event in **Shell Beach, Calif.** It's a pretty full schedule of events and my plan is to provide one or two email reports from the event much as I did in the summer for the IPNC event in Oregon. If you're attending, look for my **PinotReport** table at the Friday and Saturday walkaround tastings and say hello!

As always, I thank you all for your support and hope that you enjoy this latest issue.

-- *Gregory S. Walter, editor and publisher*

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

This Issue's Tasting Notes

All wines were tasted blind and scored before knowing anything other than that the general region they were from. My notes and comments follow.

Chehalem

Harry Peterson-Nedry's passion for wine led him in 1980 to plant his 37-acre Ridgecrest Vineyard in what would become the Ribbon Ridge district of the northern Willamette Valley. In 1990, he founded Chehalem winery to take that passion to another level. His partners in Chehalem are Bill and Cathy Stoller, owners of Stoller Vineyard, one of the three estate vineyards Chehalem uses. Peterson-Nedry's Pinots are deep and extracted with moderate amounts of new oak. Pinot bottlings include vineyard-designated bottlings from Stoller Vineyard, Ridgecrest Vineyard and Corral Creek as well as a 3 Vineyard blend and a Reserve bottling. These are very nice Pinots, worth a search of the market.

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Chehalem Mountains Corral Creek 2006

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy cherry aromas with some earthy notes; deep, rich, cherry flavors with complex earthy notes; silky texture, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe, spicy Pinot with nice depth and structure. Drinks well now, but will improve with some cellar time. Corral Creek is the vineyard surrounding the winery.

299 cases made \$44 Score: 93

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Stoller 2006

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy cinnamon and cherry aromas; deep cherry and berry flavors with cinnamon spice and sweet oak notes; nice texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Nice cherry flavors and spice notes make this really drinkable

now. The Stoller Vineyard is a south-sloping vineyard on the site of a former turkey farm in the Dundee Hills. The vineyard is owned by winery partners Bill and Cathy Stoller.

604 cases made \$44 Score: 92

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Oregon Reserve 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, ripe cherry aromas with toasty oak notes; rich, ripe, cherry and berry flavors, spice and earthy notes with toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and full Pinot with a nice dose of toasty oak. The Reserve bottling is a selection of the best lots from the Ridgecrest Vineyard.

772 cases made \$60 Score: 92

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Ribbon Ridge Ridgecrest 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, smoky, earthy aromas; ripe, rich, berry flavors; earthy, savory spice notes; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, smoky style that will pair well with grilled chicken or pork tenderloin. The Ridgecrest Vineyard is located in Ribbon Ridge, small sub-AVA on the western side of the Chehalem Mountains.

587 cases made \$44 Score: 91

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Ribbon Ridge Wind Ridge 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, earthy, stewed cherry aromas; rich, deep, stewed cherry flavors with earthy, savory spice notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, earthy style of Pinot with a lot of savory spice nuance; needs time in the glass to open up.

93 cases made \$44 Score: 91

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Silky and complex..."

Panther Creek Cellars

Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton District Shea Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, ripe, rich stewed cherry aromas with some spice and earthy notes; ripe, rich, deep and complex cherry flavors; lots of spice and forest floor notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky and complex with lots of time ahead of it, this Pinot also drinks exceptionally well now.

2,176 cases made \$40 Score: 94

SMART BUY!

"Benchmark Pinot value ..."

MacRostie Winery & Vineyards

Pinot Noir Carneros 2006

Medium ruby color; spicy red cherry and earthy aromas; deep, rich spicy red cherry and strawberry flavors with nice earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, bright flavors make this a delicious all-purpose Pinot pretty much every vintage.

5,091 cases made \$30 Score: 91

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 3 Vineyard 2006

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 6.

DuNah Vineyard & Winery

Rick & Diane DuNah retired from their electronic component manufacturing company which they founded and managed for 25 years and planted their 10-acre DuNah Vineyard in 1998 south of Sebastopol in what was then the Sonoma Coast appellation (although, now, the area where they are located has been annexed into the Russian River Valley AVA). The site is at 600 feet in elevation on a hilltop and is planted with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Prior to 2003, the fruit from the DuNah Vineyard went to Flowers Vineyard & Winery. Greg La Follette is the DuNah's winemaker, and the Pinots that he and the DuNahs craft are rich with a great core of black cherry fruit. There's no question that these are cool-climate Pinots with all of their great structure, silky texture and great balance.

DuNah Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley DuNah Estate Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; deep, ripe black cherry aromas with some forest floor notes; rich, ripe, deep black cherry flavors with spice and forest floor notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and rich, this Pinot has a lot of depth and opens up nicely with some air. The DuNah's estate vineyard is in the hills just south of Sebastopol.

911 cases made \$50 Score: 92

DuNah Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; spicy red cherry and raspberry aromas with some earthy notes; ripe rich and spicy with bright red cherry flavor and a nice silky mouthfeel; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and spicy Pinot that's delicious to drink now but has the structure to age a bit. The Sangiacomo Vineyard is off Roberts Road east of Petaluma in the Petaluma Gap area.

336 cases made \$50 Score: 93

Elk Cove Vineyards

Elk Cove Vineyards was founded in 1974 by Pat and Joe Campbell and as such is one of Oregon's oldest Pinot producers. It began as a family operation and today remains a family operation with son Adam Godlee Campbell, Elk Cove's winemaker since 1995. Elk Cove sources its Pinot Noir from 180 acres of estate vineyards on four sites in the Northern Willamette Valley: the Estate, Windhill, Mount Richmond and Five Mountain vineyards. The sites are for the most part steep, south-facing hillside vineyards. The winery's focus is on Pinot Noir as well as excellent bottlings of Pinot Gris and Pinot

blanc. Adam's Pinots are deep and concentrated with layers and layers of flavor that blossom with a little cellar time.

Elk Cove Vineyards

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Reserve 30th Anniversary Cuvee 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dense earthy aromas with some black cherry notes; rich, deep, complex black fruit flavors, earthy and spicy notes, rich, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This is a rich, ripe and deep Pinot with layers of flavors and nice texture. Give it plenty of air so you can really enjoy it. The Elk Cove Reserve is a blend of selected vineyard and barrel lots and is only produced in vintages that merit the special treatment.

180 cases made \$100 Score: 93

Elk Cove Vineyards

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Roosevelt 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy, pine aromas with some dark fruit notes; deep, rich and intense; dark cherry and berry flavors; earthy and forest floor notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, deep style of Pinot with a lot of potential. Needs a bunch of time in the glass to open up. The Roosevelt Vineyard is an organically farmed south facing hillside vineyard located just south of the winery.

240 cases made \$75 Score: 94

Elk Cove Vineyards

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Windhill 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; dark fruit, spice and earthy aromas, deep and concentrated; rich, deep, intense dark fruit flavors with spice and forest floor notes; moderate tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Intense flavors and great structure make this a Pinot for the cellar. Try it first, but give it plenty of air. The Windhill Vineyard was planted in 1974 and has been the source of vineyard designated wines for Elk Cove since 1979. Elk Cove purchased the vineyard in 1996.

490 cases made \$48 Score: 92

Foursight Wines

Foursight Wines was founded in 2007 by Bill and Nancy Charles and their daughter Kristy Charles and her fiance Joseph Webb. The Charles family are long-time winegrowers in the Anderson Valley—the four generations to work the Charles Vineyard property are the inspiration for the winery name. The winery focuses on small-production estate-grown Pinot Noir and Anderson Valley Sauvignon Blanc. The Foursight Pinot bottling is vineyard designated from the family Pinot vineyard. Kristy Charles is also the executive director of the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association.

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Foursight Wines

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Charles Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby red color; delicate stewed red cherry aromas; rich, stewed red cherry and earthy flavors, elegant mouthfeel; good structure and balance; long finish. Lighter and more elegant on the palate, this Pinot has nice aromatics and flavors. Good for a lighter meat dish.

425 cases made \$46 Score: 91

Frei Brothers

Frei Brothers is a brand owned by E. & J. Gallo winery specializing in value-priced wines including Pinot Noir. The wines are widely available and pretty reliable for everyday drinking.

Frei Brothers

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Reserve 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy, stewed berry aromas; earthy, full, stewed berry flavors with moderate tannin and oak notes; long finish. An earthy style with a lot of woody notes.

29,400 cases made \$30 Score: 84

MacRostie Winery & Vineyards

Steve MacRostie has been making Pinot Noir in and around Sonoma and Carneros for three decades, starting his career just out of UC-Davis in 1974 at Hacienda Wine Cellars. In 1987 he founded MacRostie Winery to focus on Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir from the Sonoma side of the Carneros region. In 1998 he planted his first estate vineyard on Wildcat Mountain at the southern end of the Sonoma Valley and the Carneros region. Today he produces Chardonnay, Merlot,

Syrah and Pinot Noir, in a balanced, high toned style. His Carneros appellation wines are terrific every year and widely available. The Wildcat Mountain Vineyard wines—Syrah and Pinot Noir—are deep and complex and promise even more interesting wines to come.

MacRostie Winery & Vineyards

Pinot Noir Carneros 2006

Please see “Smart Buy!” on page 4.

MacRostie Winery & Vineyards

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Wildcat Mountain Vineyard 2005

Deep ruby color; complex, deep stewed black cherry and earthy aromas; deep, complex black cherry and spice flavors with earthy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; great structure and balance. Deep and complex, this is definitely a Pinot that calls out for some time in the cellar. Grown on Steve MacRostie's cool-climate vineyard on Wildcat Mountain at the base of Sonoma Valley, this Pinot definitely has that higher elevation depth and flavor.

800 cases made \$42 Score: 92

Panther Creek Cellars

Panther Creek Cellars was founded in 1986 by Ken Wright (now of Ken Wright Cellars) in a very cool old brick building that was once the power plant for the city of McMinnville. Ken sold the winery to Ron and Linda Kaplan in 1993. The Kaplans, who were new to Oregon and the wine business, worked hard to build the brand with the help of then winemaker Mark Vlossak and current winemaker Michael Stevenson. In 2005, the Kaplans sold the brand and the business to Liz Chambers. Most of the winery's production is Pinot Noir with the balance being Chardonnay and Michael Stevenson's Pinot bottlings include Shea Vineyard, Temperance Hill Vineyard, Freedom Hill Vineyard, Vista Hills

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

“Rich, spicy and delicious...”

Saxon Brown Wines

Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley Durrell Vineyard Hayfield Block 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy, slightly stewed cherry aromas; deep, rich, ripe dark cherry flavors; lots of cinnamon and spice notes; sweet oak and silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, spicy and delicious, this is a Pinot that might just not make it to the table if you open it while you're cooking! Durrell Vineyard is a terrific Pinot vineyard located in the southwestern end of the Sonoma Valley.

263 cases made \$48 Score: 94

SMART BUY!

“Bright, spicy, tasty...”

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 3 Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; bright, spicy cherry aromas; ripe, rich, bright cherry fruit and crisp acidity; spicy, sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, spicy and very tasty Pinot—great for a lighter meal. The 3 Vineyard bottling is a blend of the winery's three vineyards. It's bottled first and is generally the earliest drinking of the Chehalem Pinots.

4,053 cases made \$32 Score: 91

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Vineyard and a Winemaker's Cuvee. The Panther Creek Pinots are wines that you want to have some patience with—I believe that they will definitely reward that patience.

Panther Creek Cellars

Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Vista Hills Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; rich, ripe, complex cherry and earth aromas; deep, ripe, stewed cherry flavors with earthy, savory notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, earthy Pinot with a great core of cherry fruit—layers of flavor emerge with some air.

247 cases made \$40 Score: 91

Panther Creek Cellars

Pinot Noir Eola-Amity Hills Temperance Hill Vineyard 2006

Deep ruby color; deep, slightly closed, earthy, oaky berry aromas; ripe, rich, cherry/berry flavors with complex earthy and oaky notes; nice mouthfeel; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot has great complexity and depth—it's deliciously complex now but will definitely improve with cellar patience.

521 cases made \$40 Score: 93

Panther Creek Cellars

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Freedom Hill Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; bright, spicy cherry and earthy aromas; ripe, bright, spicy cherry flavors; nice mouthfeel, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and spicy, this is a nice Pinot to sit and sip with friends.

980 cases made \$40 Score: 92

Panther Creek Cellars

Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton District Shea Vineyard 2006

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 4.

Saxon Brown Wines

Saxon Brown Wines is a small, Sonoma Valley winery founded in 1997. Owned and operated by Jeff and Terisa Gaffner and their two sons, Saxon Brown produces Semillon, Syrah Rose, Syrah, Zinfandel and Pinot Noir from some very interesting vineyards mainly in and around the Sonoma Valley, including the family's century-old Casa Santinamaria Vineyard where his field-blended old vine Zinfandel is really terrific. Jeff loves to make elegant, ageworthy wines and his Pinots fit right into that plan. The Saxon Brown Pinot bottlings include Durell Vineyard and Parmelee-Hill Vineyard, two terrific and adjacent vineyards from the southern end of the Sonoma Valley and the Black Kite Vineyard from Anderson Valley (Jeff is also the winemaker for Black Kite Cellars). Annual production is small; these are wines you definitely want to pay attention to.

Saxon Brown Wines

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Black Kite Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; bit closed but deep spice and black fruit aromas are there; deep, rich, ripe black cherry flavors with some savory spice and earthy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep Pinot with a lot of potential as yet unrealized; the pieces are all there and it just needs some time in the bottle and glass.

120 cases made \$47 Score: 91

Saxon Brown Wines

Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley Durell Vineyard Hayfield Block 2006

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 6.

Saxon Brown Wines

Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley Parmelee-Hill Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; subtle, spicy and earthy aromas; rich, ripe red cherry and spicy flavors; bright and silky in the mouth; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy Pinot with subtle aromas and really nice mouthfeel. From the Parmelee-Hill Vineyard, owned and managed by Steve Hill, who also manages the next-door Durell Vineyard, in Southern Sonoma Valley.

236 cases made \$40 Score: 92

TAZ Vineyards

TAZ Vineyards gets its name from the nickname of founder Bob "Taz" Steinhauer. Steinhauer earned that nickname (short for Tasmanian Devil) by his feverish approach to vineyard development first in the Napa Valley and later in the Central Coast as the senior executive in charge of vineyard development for Beringer Vineyards, now owned by Fosters Group, also owner of TAZ Vineyard. Steinhauer was also instrumental in developing, in partnership with Fiddlehead Cellars' Kathy Joseph, the Fiddlestix Vineyard in the Santa Rita Hills. TAZ Vineyards winemaker Natasha Boffman, with experience in California and Australia, crafts the TAZ Pinots in a style that is bold, yet balanced. Pinot bottlings include a regional Santa Barbara County blend and vineyard designates from Fiddlestix and the Cuyama River bottling from the North Canyon Vineyard in Santa Maria Valley.

Taz Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Fiddlestix Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep plum and cherry aromas with some earth and a touch of pepper; big, rich and deep black cherry and plum flavors; spice, pepper notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, deep Pinot with complex flavors and a great future ahead.

2,200 cases made \$35 Score: 91

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Vista Hills

John and Nancy McClintock came to the Willamette Valley's Dundee Hills in 1995 from Tucson, Arizona and successful careers in land development. They found a nearly idyllic 20-acre property at top of Hilltop Lane overlooking the town of Dundee to the north and Vista Hills Vineyard was born. Nearby neighbors include Domaine Serene and Domaine Drouhin. After some acquiring additional vineyard land, Vista Hills has 42 acres of estate vineyard; eight acres are planted in Pinot Gris and the balance in Pinot Noir. The Vineyard faces primarily to the southwest and carries the LIVE (Low Input Viticulture & Enology) and Salmon Safe certifications. The McClintocks' philanthropic bent came with them, in the form of their McClintock Foundation—10 percent of their wine sales goes to that foundation providing support to students who work while they attend college. Several winemakers in the area purchase fruit from the Vista Hills Vineyard for their labels—this small group of winemakers also make small lots of wine to be bottled under the Vista Hills label. The McClintocks call them their "guest winemakers." Pinot bottlings include Saga Hills (produced by at nearby DePonte Cellars), Tusculum (produced by Michael Stevenson at Panther Creek Cellars) and the Treehouse bottlings of Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris (produced by Laurent Montalieu at Northwest Wine Company). Tasting and sales are available at the "Treehouse" tasting room.

Vista Hills

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Tusculum 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; closed, some earthy aromas; ripe, rich, bit closed on palate too; some stewed cherry and earthy

flavors; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy Pinot with some interesting flavors peaking through at this early stage.

100 cases made \$44 Score: 91

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines reviewed in this issue.

Chehalem

503.538.4700, www.chehalemwines.com

DuNah Vineyard & Winery

707.829.9666, www.dunahwinery.com

Elk Cove Vineyards

877.355.2683, www.elkcove.com

Foursight Wines

707.895.2889, www.foursightwines.com

Frei Brothers

866.346.3963, www.freibrothers.com

MacRostie Winery and Vineyards

707.996.4480, www.macrostiewinery.com

Panther Creek Cellars

503.472.8080, www.panthercreekcellars.com

Saxon Brown Wines

707.939.9530, www.saxonbrown.com

TAZ Vineyards

888.544.3223, www.tazvineyards.com

Vista Hills

503.864.3200, www.vistahillsvineyard.com

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PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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Editorial Philosophy

PinotReport is an independent newsletter owned, written and published by Gregory S. Walter. All tastings unless otherwise noted are done blind by the Editor. Any and all opinions and analysis expressed in these pages unless otherwise noted belong to Gregory S. Walter, who has no financial involvement or connection whatsoever in the production, distribution or sales of wine.

Wine Samples

PinotReport accepts wine samples for use in its general "In The Market" new releases tastings as well as its special tasting reports. Please follow these guidelines for submitting wine samples for review.

1. All samples should be fully finished bottles ready for market.
2. Please submit two bottles of each wine.
3. Each wine submitted should include a data sheet with at minimum the suggested retail price, case production and distribution data.

All samples should be sent to the following address:

PinotReport

Attn: Gregory S. Walter

625 Ross Court, Sonoma, CA 95476

Tel: 707.935.0326

About Our Tastings

Generally, there are two types of tastings that appear in each issue of **PinotReport**. The first are our regular "In The Market" tastings of Pinot Noirs new on the market.

The second are our special "Tasting Reports" where we from time to time focus on a particular appellation, producer or style.

How We Taste

We taste wine in small flights with no more than 12 wines in a tasting session and one tasting session in a day. While all scores are finalized before the wines are revealed, wines are usually kept open for a day or more to see how the wines develop. Additional commentary may be added based on this, but scores are not changed.

All tasting unless otherwise noted is done blind by the Editor. Other tasters may participate, but their scores and comments are not part of the official tasting record. The tasting coordinator (who does not taste) arranges and bags all wines, which are then scored and comments recorded before bags are removed. Duplicate wines are inserted in tastings to measure consistency.

Our tastings are done under controlled, consistent conditions. We do not under any circumstances use tasting notes from large tasting events or other sub-optimal tasting venues in our published, scored tasting reports.

Wine Prices and Sourcing

Wine prices vary all around the country and can often vary significantly within the same city. We make every effort to only publish a winery's suggested retail price. This price in some cases will be higher than those you can find in your local markets. The wines we taste either come from the wineries in the form of tasting samples (always finished bottles ready for market) or wines we purchase at retail or at the winery.

Our Wine Ratings

The wines we taste are rated using a 100-point rating system. We fully understand the ongoing debate over the use of the 100-point system and while we respect the right of those who simply despise the system to continue to do so, we believe that the scale has value when used with the accompanying tasting notes as a **relative guide** to wine quality that has the added benefit of **being familiar** and **truly intuitive** for most consumers.

PinotReport's 100-Point Scale

96-100	SUPERIOR; it doesn't get better.
90-95	OUTSTANDING; approaching the best
86-89	ABOVE AVERAGE; a very good Pinot.
80-85	AVERAGE; OK if it's all you have.
60-79	BELOW AVERAGE; not recommended.
50-59	UNDRINKABLE.

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