

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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WINNER

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

2010s starting to arrive...

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL! We've enjoyed a run of amazing sunny weather here in Sonoma for December and now the beginning of January—just spectacular weather. No measurable rain since November. I am usually the one loving the rain about now, but how can you not love sunny and 65 in January?

We are starting to see the 2010 Pinots hitting the market (there are some significant wines in this issue) so it's a good time to talk briefly about what you can expect from the wines from that vintage.

I have tasted a significant number of 2010 California Pinots both in barrel and now in bottle as they come to me for review. **The best of the 2010s I've seen display very nice depth and structure like their predecessors in 2009.** They are more opulent and forward in both aromas and flavor profile. This seems to fit with the pattern I've seen over the past decade: even numbered years ('04, '06, '08, '10) are more forward, fruitier, opulent and earlier drinking while the odd numbered years ('05, '07, '09) are more angular with better structure and longer ageability.

Quantity will be an issue for some producers (the same will hold with 2011) as the vintage resulted in greatly reduced yields due sometimes extreme fruit selection. Most winemakers I have spoken with are frustrated with the smaller quantities of wine and yet have been pleasantly surprised with the quality.

I have not tasted any 2010 Oregon Pinots yet but I can tell you that the best will be some of the best wines produced yet in Oregon. The vintage there was very long and slow to develop. September brought rain and then October hit and the sun came out. Long hang time, beautiful ripening.

This issue features some terrific new releases from a wide range of producers including **Black Kite, Carr Vineyard, Couloir, Denison Cellars, Fat Monk, Freestone, Fulcrum, Ghost Hill, Longoria, Nuggucciet, Pali Wine Co., Ryan Cellars, Sequana, Sojourn Cellars and Sonria.**

Please also see details on my latest PinotReport Wine Cruise on pages 2 and 3.

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

-- Gregory S. Walter, editor and publisher

“Passion for Pinot” Cruise



Join Greg Walter, Writer & Editor of PinotReport
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“Passion for Pinot” Cruise

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Greg Walter

Writer and Editor, PinotReport

I'd like to invite you to join me for a truly memorable experience—my PinotReport Wine Cruise celebrating the 10th Anniversary Pinot Passion Awards. We'll be taking a seven-day river cruise on the Rhone River and an additional four-day visit to the beautiful Burgundy wine region—the home of Pinot Noir. All along the way, you will be treated to some of the most incredible Pinot Noirs California and Oregon have to offer—which are the winners of my Pinot Passion Awards and you will be the first to learn about--and taste--those winners!

I will be your guide as we explore some beautiful wine country off the ship and as we explore the Pinot Passion Award winning wines through a series of wine tastings, seminars and dinners over our week together. I'm thrilled to be working with the professionals at Expedia CruiseShipCenters. It will be a week to remember!



Wine Experience Itinerary Burgundy Post-Tour and River Wine Cruise

Day	Port of Call	Arrive	Depart
Sun Aug 19	Depart Arles, France Welcome Aboard Party & Group Dinner		
Mon Aug 20	Wine Tasting & Group Dinner Arles, France		
Tues Aug 21	Group Dinner - Avignon, France		
Wed Aug 22	Wine Tasting & Group Dinner Viviers, Avignon		
Thur Aug 23	Wine Tasting & Group Dinner Tournon, Tain l'Hermitage, France		
Fri Aug 24	Wine Tasting & Group Dinner Lyon, France		
Sat Aug 25	Wine Tasting & Group Dinner Chalon sur Saone (Beaune), France		
Sun Aug 26	Disembark AM		
Sun Aug 26	Depart River Royale, Two wineries, Wine Lunch and Wine Dinner		
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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.

Black Kite Cellars

Black Kite Cellars is truly a family venture—three generations of the Green family are involved in the winery's day to day operations. Donald and Maureen Green moved to Sonoma County in 1987. Donald had founded three telecommunications companies in the North Bay and was an avid ornithologist; Maureen a dedicated animal lover. They wanted to be a part of the agricultural lifestyle of the area. They purchased the 40-acre parcel in the Anderson Valley that would become the Black Kite Vineyard in 1995. The land is in the "Deep End" area of the valley along the Navarro River near the town of Philo and had a long-exhausted Gewurztraminer vineyard in the lower blocks down by the river. In 1999, The Greens replanted the vineyard to Pinot Noir and added two additional blocks up the hill from the river. Three blocks are Redwoods' Edge at the top of the property, Stony Terrace in the middle and River Bend along the river. Donald and Maureen's two daughters, Rebecca Green Birdsall and Victoria Green Comfort, and grandson Michael Green are also involved in Black Kite. Rebecca oversees all winery operations including working with winemaker Jeff Gaffner (his family's label is Saxon Brown). Pinot bottlings include a blend of selected blocks called Kite's Rest and three block specific bottlings—Redwoods' Edge, Stony Terrace and River Turn. The style is deep and complex with a great core of fruit. Oh, and the name—Black Kite Cellars—comes from one of birder Donald Green's favorite birds now known as the White Tailed Kite. This mostly white falcon-shaped raptor used to be known as the Black Shouldered Kite. The Greens got creative, shortened the name and changed the bird on the label to all black and a brand was born.

Black Kite Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Kite's Rest 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; complex cherry and berry aromas with cinnamon and toasty notes; deep, rich, cherry flavors with some earthy and cinnamon notes, silky texture with toasty oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex and big Pinot with a lot of deep flavors; really needs two hours in the glass to show its stuff.

1,000 cases made \$42 Score: 93

Black Kite Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Stony Terrace Block 2009

Deep ruby color; dense, deep dark cherry and plum aromas with toasty cinnamon notes; rich and full concentrated cherry flavors with lots of earthy, spicy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, dark, dense Pinot; once it opens up it's a perfect pairing for beef shortribs or a grilled steak.

230 cases made \$52 Score: 93

Carr Vineyards & Winery

Ryan Carr studied and graduated from the University of Arizona with a degree in graphic arts. Shortly thereafter he decided to move to the Santa Ynez Valley to make wine. In 1999 he made his first wine—10 cases—in his garage. He and his friend Andy Kahn (Kahn Winery) decided to start a vineyard development company so that they could develop and source vineyards for their respective winemaking efforts. At the same time, Ryan became Andy Kahn's assistant winemaker to further hone his craft. Ryan's Carr Vineyards & Winery operation is located in downtown Santa Barbara in an old 1940s Quonset hut that's been outfitted on the inside to look like the inside of a cave. In addition to Pinot Noir, Ryan makes Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Pinot Gris. His Pinot bottlings include a regional Santa Rita Hills blend called Three Vineyards and vineyard designates from The Yard Vineyard,

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Amazing depth and complexity..."

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, intense aromas of tobacco, leather, and stewed cherry; ripe, big flavors of stewed cherry with very complex earth and leather notes; silky texture; great structure and balance; long finish. Amazingly deep and complex, this is a Pinot that never ceases to impress me.

975 cases made \$48 Score: 95

SMART BUY!

"Bright and silky..."

Pali Wine Company

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Riviera 2009

Medium ruby color; bright, spicy red cherry aromas; rich, ripe, bright cherry fruit flavors with spicy, toasty notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, silky Pinot with a lot of nice flavors.

3,576 cases made \$19 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Kessler-Haak Vineyard and the Turner Vineyard, all in Santa Rita Hills.

Carr Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Kessler-Haak Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, pretty aromas of black plum, pepper and toasty oak; deep, ripe, black cherry and plum flavors with earthy, smoky notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot with a lot going on! Needs time to open up and will definitely reward a few years in your cellar.

98 cases made \$50 Score: 93

Carr Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Three Vineyards 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, stewed cherry and plum aromas with spice and pepper notes; rich, ripe, complex plum and cherry flavors with black pepper and toasty oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, ripe flavors make this well-structured Pinot great to drink on its own or to pair with a hearty meat dish.

350 cases made \$45 Score: 92

Carr Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Turner Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; deep black cherry aromas with toasty oak and herbal notes; deep, complex and full bodied, dark cherry and plum flavors with herbal and pepper notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Concentrated, deep Pinot with the structure to stand up to a hearty steak or tri-tip.

210 cases made \$45 Score: 93

Couloir Wines

Couloir founder Jon Grant found his passion for wine and Pinot Noir while pursuing another deep passion: skiing and ski mountaineering. He took a job managing a wine shop at the Snowbird Ski Resort in Utah. After several years of skiing and learning about wine he decided he wanted to make his own wines. He worked in the cellars of top Napa producers like Turley, Plumpjack and Corison before launching Couloir (named for the deep and steep mountain gorges he encountered while skiing). Jon produces two labels. The Couloir wines are vineyard designated and intended to convey their place of origin. The Straight Line wines are more value-oriented appellation blends. Pinot bottlings from Couloir and Straight Line source from Mendocino and Marin counties.

Couloir Wines

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Monument Tree Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy aromas with dusty cherry

notes; rich, ripe, bright cherry flavors with some spice and herbal notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, spicy Pinot that's drinking well right now. Delicious on its own.

143 cases made \$38 Score: 90

Couloir Wines

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Roma's Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; very subtle cherry and spice aromas; lighter bodied, subtle stewed cherry and spice flavors; silky texture, elegant; good structure and balance; long finish. Lighter bodied Pinot with subtle and elegant flavors.

150 cases made \$38 Score: 88

Couloir Wines

Pinot Noir Marin County Chileno Valley Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; complex spicy cherry and herbal aromas; rich, ripe bright cherry and spice flavors; some sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky, bright Pinot with really nice flavor.

100 cases made \$38 Score: 90

Couloir Wines

Pinot Noir Mendocino County Oppenlander Vineyard 2009

Deep ruby color; deep, complex dusty cherry and berry aromas with some forest floor notes; complex, deep cherry and berry flavors; earthy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and complex, this Pinot calls for a nice cassoulet or braised beef.

118 cases made \$38 Score: 91

Straight Line

Pinot Noir Mendocino County 2009

Medium ruby color; bright cherry cola and spice aromas; ripe, rich, bright cherry fruit with spice and cola notes; silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and delicious Pinot that drinks perfectly well by itself.

660 cases made \$28 Score: 92

Denison Cellars

Tim and Denise Wilson founded Denison Cellars as much as a lifestyle choice as a business/career decision. Tim decided early on that his education in economics and career path in the credit card business was not going to be his "dream career." Denise, a registered nurse, encouraged him to pursue his passion for wine and Tim set out to do the research and get the training and experience at places like Chateau Ste. Michele, Edna Valley Vineyard, Benton-Lane Winery and Dobbles Family Estate that would eventually lead to the founding of

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Denison Cellars in the Willamette Valley in 2009. Tim's Pinot bottling comes from the Kiff Vineyard in the Yamhill-Carlton District. I'm looking forward to watching this label develop.

Denison Cellars

Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton District Kiff Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; bright, spicy cherry aromas with some tea notes; rich cherry flavors with earthy and oak notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright fruit and silky texture highlight this Pinot. Perfect for grilled pork tenderloin.

110 cases made \$38 Score: 92

Fat Monk

Fat Monk is a label produced by winemaker Adam LaZarre at the Villa San Juliette winery in San Miguel near Paso Robles in the California Central Coast. Villa San Juliette is the creation of Nigel Lythgoe and Ken Warwick, childhood friends and partners in reality shows like "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance." Villa San Juliette produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Zinfandel and Sauvignon Blanc. Winemaker Adam LaZarre produces Pinot Noir and other wines from Central Coast fruit under the Fat Monk label.

Fat Monk

Pinot Noir Central Coast 2009

Please see "Smart Buy!" below.

Freestone Vineyards

It isn't often that a legendary Napa Valley Cabernet producer branches out into a serious Pinot Noir venture. For Joseph Phelps Vineyards, it was the driving desire of founder Joseph Phelps to produce world-class Chardonnay and Pinot Noir that brought them to the small coastal hamlet of Freestone, in

western Sonoma County literally a few miles east of Bodega Bay. The area around Freestone is really ideal Pinot country--very cool climate with fog and ocean influence. In 1999, well before "Sideways" and the Pinot phenomenon, Joseph Phelps and his son Bill Phelps purchased 100 acres of hillside sites and began developing and planting 80 acres of Pinot Noir and 20 acres of Chardonnay on three separate sites named Freestone, Quarter Moon and Ferguson. The sites were challenging and required careful attention to get established. Initial vintages of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Freestone vineyards were trucked to the Phelps St. Helena winery for vinification. In 2005, Phelps broke ground on a strikingly innovative and yet unobtrusive gravity-fed winery building located in the midst of the vineyard, built into the hillside. Both organic and biodynamic farming are utilized by the vineyard team. Theresa Heredia heads up the winemaking team at Freestone--and having been with Phelps since 2002 and at Freestone since the winery was built, she has a unique feel for the place and the vineyards. Working with Theresa is Assistant Winemaker Justin Ennis, a nine-year veteran of the Williams-Selyem cellar. Pinot bottlings at Freestone include an estate Pinot under the Freestone label and a Pinot under the Fogdog label that is a blend of all the estate's Pinot vineyards. This is an operation to watch as I'm convinced some of the better Pinot in the state will eventually come from this area and this winery.

Freestone Vineyards

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2008

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, cranberry and cherry aromas with complex spice and earthy notes; rich, ripe, deep, complex cherry flavors with spicy cranberry and earthy notes; silky, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot with great flavor. Needs more time to develop.

3,900 cases made \$55 Score: 93

Fulcrum Wines

For David and Christinna Rossi, founders of Fulcrum Wines, the metaphor of a fulcrum being a point of balance for a lever

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Delicious and deep..."

Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Fe Ciega Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, plum and black cherry aromas with pepper and smoke notes; big, rich, deep pepper and plum flavors with smoky notes; great texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Delicious, deep Pinot with the kind of complexity I've come to expect from this vineyard. Perfect match for grilled lamb or pork.

605 cases made \$48 Score: 95

SMART BUY!

"Subtle, lighter bodied..."

Fat Monk

Pinot Noir Central Coast 2009

Medium ruby color; subtle stewed cherry aromas with smoky notes; subtle cherry and berry flavors with some smoky, spice notes; bit short in the middle; lingering finish. Lighter bodied Pinot with very nice flavors; great with lighter fare.

n/a cases made \$15 Score: 88

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

is what their Pinot venture is all about. They strive for elegance and balance in their wines. David is the winemaker and began his winemaking career as a home winemaker with a basement packed full of equipment and barrels. David grew up in southern Arizona and worked in his family's restaurant business. After earning his bachelor's degree in Finance from the University of Arizona and his masters from Carnegie Mellon, he went to work in the food industry. Christinna runs the sales and marketing side of of the winery. The founded Fulcrum Wines with the 2005 vintage and have gradually built relationships with some top Pinot vineyards. David makes the wines at a custom-crush facility in the Napa Valley. Pinot bottlings include a vineyard designate from Gap's Crown Vineyard in Sonoma Coast and a proprietary blend called On Point.

Fulcrum Wines

Pinot Noir North Coast On Point Christinna's Cuvee 2009

Medium ruby color; spicy strawberry and cherry aromas; rich, strawberry and cherry flavors with spicy, cinnamon notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, easy drinking Pinot with bright flavors.

309 cases made \$34 Score: 92

Fulcrum Wines

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2009

Deep ruby color; complex plum and cranberry aromas with forest floor notes; complex, rich plum and cherry flavors with earthy, herbal notes; some tannin and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, deep Pinot with a lot of interesting layers just waiting for some air time to open them up!

150 cases made \$54 Score: 93

Ghost Hill Cellars

The 234-acre property in Carlton, Oregon where Ghost Hill Cellars is located has been in the Bayliss family for more than a century. For most of that time, the family has been involved in growing crops like hay, clover and wheat and raising cattle and sheep. Today, grapes are the family's only crop and the fourth and fifth generation of the Bayliss family is now growing and making fine Pinot Noir in the Yamhill-Carlton sub-appellation. Fourth generation Mike Bayliss and his wife Drenda live in the original farmhouse built by Daniel and Samuel, the first Bayliss family members to work the land. Mike and Drenda's son Michael, their daughter Bernadette and their son-in-law, Cameron Bower now also work at the vineyard. are working together to make the vineyard a success. The winery name comes from an old legend surrounding the property. In the early 1860s, Oregon was in the middle of its "gold rush." A miner was traveling along a road that ran through what is now the Bayliss property on his way to

Portland. He stopped for the night at the top of what is now known as Ghost Hill. Someone snuck into his camp during the night, killed him and took his gold. To this day, it is said that the miner can be seen still looking for that stolen gold.

Ghost Hill Cellars

Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton District Bayliss-Bower Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; light, herbal, earthy aromas with some cherry notes; subtle, herbal/earthy flavors; bit short on finish. Subtle, lighter bodied Pinot; pair with an herbal pasta.

245 cases made \$42 Score: 87

Ghost Hill Cellars

Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton District Bayliss-Bower Vineyard Prospector's Reserve 2009

Medium ruby color; herbal aromas with some oak and fruit notes; subtle, medium bodied cherry and herbal flavors with some oaky notes; lingering finish. Herbal, earthy style of Pinot that is a bit out of balance on the earthy/oak side.

85 cases made \$60 Score: 86

Longoria Wines

Longoria Wines specializes in small-lot bottlings of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and a range of Bordeaux, Rhone, Italian and Spanish varietal bottlings. Established in 1982, Longoria is the wine venture of Rick and Diana Longoria. Winemaker Rick Longoria has nearly three decades of experience making wine for several wineries in Santa Barbara County. He started the Longoria label in 1982 and continued to make small amounts of wine between that first vintage and when he and Diana decided to make Longoria their full-time occupation in 1997. The Longoria tasting room is located in Los Olivos; the winery is in the Lompoc "Wine Ghetto," a small industrial park where many Santa Rita Hills producers have their winery facilities. Rick's Pinot bottlings include a "Lovely Rita" Santa Rita Hills blend, a bottling from his Fe Ciega Vineyard ("blind faith" in Spanish), and bottlings from the Bien Nacido Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley and Rancho Santa Rosa in Santa Rita Hills. All are full, rich and complex Pinots with a great core of fruit and great balance.

Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, smoky cherry and plum aromas; deep, complex, rich smoky cherry flavors with meaty, earthy notes; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, toasty and complex, this Pinot is perfect for a grilled steak; give it some time to open in the glass.

150 cases made \$45 Score: 94

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Fe Ciega Vineyard 2009

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

Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Lovely Rita 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; tight, deep aromas of plum and black pepper; deep, rich plum and cherry flavors with spice and black pepper notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, deep Pinot that is still a baby... needs time in the bottle and glass.

355 cases made \$32 Score: 94

Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex aromas of plum and herbs with some earthy notes; deep, closed, earthy, plum flavors with anise and herbal notes; moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, deep Pinot with great structure—needs time to open and will age well in your cellar.

110 cases made \$45 Score: 92

Nuggucciet Cellars

Nuggucciet Cellars (pronounced "New" Gaa" "Shay") is the creation of Russ and Nancy Briley and is named for the couple's two dogs Nugget and Gucci. Russ Briley writes a wine column for the Ventura County Star newspaper. Both Russ and Nancy developed their passion for wine and Pinot Noir over the years after taking a wine and food pairing class at their local community college. The passion developed into a desire to make wine and then create a commercial label. They turned to Mike Brown of Cantara Cellars in Camarillo to help them produce their first vintage. Their fruit source was a four-acre section of the Riverbench Vineyard in Santa Maria Valley called "The Mesa" and is a seriously good first effort. One to watch!

Nuggucciet Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley 2009

Medium ruby color; subdued earthy cherry aromas with some herbal notes; ripe, delicate cherry and earth flavors; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Elegant Pinot with some nice subtle flavors. Easy to drink by itself or pair with a roasted chicken.

38 cases made \$25 Score: 90

Pali Wine Company

Tim Perr and Scott Knight, partners in an insurance and

actuary consulting firm, founded Pali Wine Co. in 2005 with a group of their friends and colleagues. The winery name came from a popular nickname for Pacific Palisades, where their day jobs were based. Pali Wine Co. got off to a fast start, hiring Brian Loring as their consulting winemaker and making a string of terrific 2005 Pinots from vineyards up and down the West Coast. Pali's focus has always been on finding the best vineyard sites and representing those vineyards through vineyard-designated bottlings, including Shea Vineyard in the Willamette Valley, Olivet Grange in Russian River Valley, Durell Vineyard in the Sonoma Valley, Cargasacchi Jalama in Santa Barbara County and Turner Vineyard in Santa Rita Hills. In 2008, Pali hired Kenneth Juhasz (Auteur, The Donum Estate) to take over the winemaking reins and finished construction of a new winery facility in Lompoc, California, in the Santa Rita Hills. Kenneth is now in a consulting role and Aaron Walker is the day-to-day winemaker. Tim Perr is probably the closest thing to the leader of the band—having followed the Pinots for several vintages now, Pali continues to be a winery to watch.

Pali Wine Company

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Bluffs 2009

Medium ruby color; subtle berry and earthy aromas; deep, rich berry and cherry flavors with earthy and herbal notes; slight tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. A subtle, earthy style of Pinot that would be great with an earthy mushroom pizza.

1,229 cases made \$19 Score: 91

Pali Wine Company

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Riviera 2009

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 4.

Pali Wine Company

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Alphabets 2009

Medium ruby color; complex, earthy aromas with some berry and blueberry notes; ripe, rich, earthy cherry and berry flavors with spicy notes; silky texture with some sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky, rich Pinot with much brighter flavors than I expect from most Oregon Pinots. Great flavor.

1,030 cases made \$19 Score: 93

Ryan Cellars

Marguerite ("Peggy") Ryan founded Ryan Cellars in 1996 having thrown aside her law school education years before to pursue an enology education and a passion for winemaking. She began her hands on winemaking in Warren Winiarski's cellar at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and has since worked with David Ramey, Lane Tanner and most recently John Kongsgaard. Her Ryan Cellars label is all about Pinot Noir

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

from a changing cast of top vineyards. Her production is very small but the wines are really worth seeking out.

Ryan Cellars

Pinot Noir Carneros 2008

Medium ruby color; ripe, rich cherry and baking spice aromas; rich, expansive cherry and raspberry flavors with subtle oak accents; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, rich Pinot with nice expansive flavors.

168 cases made \$45 Score: 90

Ryan Cellars

Pinot Noir Mendocino Ridge Manchester Ridge Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color; ripe, exotic dark raspberry, rhubarb and forest floor aromas; rich, full raspberry, plum and dark cherry flavors; some oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, rich Pinot with superb balance.

85 cases made \$55 Score: 91

Ryan Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Silacci Vineyard 2007

Deep ruby color; complex, deep cedar/pine forest aromas with cranberry notes; deep black raspberry, cranberry and cherry flavors with complex spice notes, velvety texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, rich, complex Pinot that gains considerably with a good hour or more of air.

240 cases made \$34 Score: 94

Ryan Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Mountain Van der Kamp Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color; ripe, savory spiced cherry and plum aromas with forest floor notes; deep, full cherry and plum flavors with spice notes; velvety texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Velvety, supple Pinot with layers and layers of complex flavor.

95 cases made \$47 Score: 94

Sequana Vineyards

Sequana Vineyards is named for Sequana, the Franco-Roman goddess of the River Seine, which flows through the ancient birthplace of Pinot Noir. Sequana Vineyard is owned by Swiss-born, international wine entrepreneur Donald Hess, who also owns the Hess Collection winery in Napa Valley. The Sequana Pinots are made by James MacPhail who has earned considerable acclaim for his Pinots under the MacPhail Family label. The more you look at this venture the more you become convinced that the operating mantra is to make the best Pinot they can pretty much regardless of the cost. James MacPhail

has sourced some excellent and not necessarily well known vineyards from Green Valley at the western end of the Russian River Valley and also from the Santa Lucia Highlands. These are most definitely Pinots that should be on your short list to taste and acquire.

Sequana Vineyards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex dark cherry and toasty oak aromas with spicy notes; rich, ripe, very deep cherry and spicy flavors with a bit of tannin and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Delightfully rich and ripe Pinot with juicy fruit flavors; great on its own but perfect with any grilled meats.

514 cases made \$45 Score: 95

Sequana Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands 2009

Medium ruby color; subtle, smoky cherry aromas with some earthy notes; subtle stewed cherry flavors with smoky oak and earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Very silky and subtle Pinot with a delicious smoky note.

6,202 cases made \$32 Score: 91

Sojourn Cellars

Craig Haserot and Erich Bradley met on the tennis courts of the town of Sonoma. Both were really from different worlds—Craig was a dot-com boomer and Erich was the winemaker at Audelssa Winery high in the mountains above Sonoma. Both had a passion for tennis and, they soon discovered, for great wines as well. The duo created Sojourn Cellars to create, at first, handcrafted Cabernet Sauvignon from the mountains high above Sonoma. And while their Cabernets are terrific, their lush, deep, texture-driven Pinot Noirs are truly the big attraction for this venture and really Erich's sweet spot as a winemaker. It seems that each year I like these Pinots a little more. Sojourn Pinot bottlings include blends from Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley, as well as vineyard designates from Windsor Oaks Vineyard in Russian River Valley, and Rodgers Creek Vineyard, Gap's Crown Vineyard and the Sangiacomo Vineyard, all three in the Sonoma Coast/Petaluma Gap region. These are amazing wines, year in and year out.

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; tight, earthy red cherry aromas; rich red cherry/berry flavors with spicy oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and earthy, this Pinot will do wonders for just about anything it's paired with.

425 cases made \$42 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Wohler Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; spicy, rich aromas of anise and herbs with some cherry notes; lush, juicy red cherry flavors with complex spicy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Very complex Pinot that reveals even more complexity as it opens in the glass.

200 cases made \$48 Score: 94

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy cherry and spice aromas; deep, complex cherry flavors with many layers of spice, anise and earth notes; silky texture; great structure and balance; long finish. Complex and many-layered Pinot that is a testament to the fact that an appellation blend in the hands of the right winemaker can be as good or better than a vineyard designate.

925 cases made \$39 Score: 95

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2010

Deep ruby color; complex, dark cherry aromas with bright spicy notes; rich, clean cherry flavors with earthy notes and sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Big but elegant Pinot with amazing class and complexity.

800 cases made \$48 Score: 94

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Ridgetop Vineyard 2010

Deep ruby color; deep aromas of spice and pepper with bright cherry notes; bright cherry flavors with spicy notes; lush, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, silky Pinot with amazing texture.

225 cases made \$59 Score: 93

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Rodgers Creek Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep earthy, mushroom aromas; complex, earthy cherry flavors with forest floor notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, earthy Pinot with great texture. Perfect match for anything with mushrooms.

375 cases made \$48 Score: 92

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2010

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

Sonria Wines

Sonria is the dream and wine venture of Keith and Stacey Emerson. The name comes from the Spanish verb "sonreír"

which means "to smile" and refers specifically to the couple's daughter Aubrey's smile (As a Dad with a daughter I can't think of a better name!). Keith and Stacey both grew up in San Diego attending the same schools until they went there separate ways for college only to meet up again in their professional lives. They married in 2004 and after traveling extensively through the wine regions of California decided to make their own Pinot Noir. Keith is the winemaker. They have landed an amazing vineyard source for their first bottling—the Shea Vineyard of the Yamhill-Carlton District in the Willamette Valley. Another new small label to watch!

Sonria Wines

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep cherry, cranberry aromas with some earthy notes; deep, stewed cherry and cranberry flavors with earthy, forest floor notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Elegant, balanced Pinot with nice subtle notes; drinking well now.

180 cases made \$60 Score: 91

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines discussed in this issue.

Black Kite Cellars

415.923.0277, www.blackkitecellars.com

Carr Vineyards & Winery

805.965.7985, www.carrwinery.com

Couloir Wines

707.968.0919, www.couloirwines.com

Denison Cellars

541.517.3370, www.denisoncellars.com

Fat Monk

831.402.1153, www.villasanjuliette.com

Freestone Vineyard

707.874.1010, www.freestonevineyards.com

Fulcrum Wines

732.610.9602, www.fulcrumwines.com

Ghost Hill Cellars

503.852.7347, www.ghosthillcellarsllc.com

Longoria Wines

805.688.0305, www.longoriawine.com

Nuggucciet Cellars

661.993.0462, www.nugguccietcellars.com

Pali Wine Company

805.736.7200, www.paliwineco.com

Ryan Cellars

707.254.7957

Sequana

707.265.3490, www.sequanavineyards.com

Sojourn Cellars

707.933.9753, www.sojourncellars.com

Sonria Wines

707.927.5778, www.sonriawines.com

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 one bottle 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: 707.696.7553

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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