

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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Give It Some Air...

MORE THAN ANY OTHER WINE, PINOT NOIR NEEDS AIR.

I've written briefly on this subject in past issues and referred to it in many tasting notes, but lately this subject has really kept coming into my thoughts. And as I was looking for a short essay to start this issue, I thought that this was as good a time as any to get back up on the soap box.

Pinot needs air!

If you are like so many wine lovers who open a great bottle of Pinot Noir minutes before serving it to yourself or your guests, **you're missing out on at least 80 percent** of what that wine has to offer. **Pinot needs air!**

However, Pinot Noir's relationship with air is not so cut and dried. Like the wine, the relationship is complex. While it needs air to allow it to really open up in your glass, it's different while the wine is still in the winery.

During the winemaking process, Pinot abhors air and winemakers do just about everything they can to keep air away from their Pinots. It's not like the old days (especially in California) when most Pinots looked thin and even brownish and tasted tired—like they were 20 years old at release. In many cases, this was because of excess handling and exposure to air in the winemaking process. Today, Pinot winemakers in general **do everything they can do to keep Pinot away from air**—little or no pumping, gentle handling, gravity fed wineries, a “leave it alone” winemaking philosophy.

However, once that Pinot Noir is in the bottle—or on your table awaiting your enjoyment—air becomes one of Pinot's best friends and, I think, **a critical element in its enjoyment.**

How much air? **A minimum of one hour of air. Two hours is better** to really show its nuance; it's depth of flavor. **But we are a people who want everything now.** We love our immediate gratification. Winemakers in the past two decades have responded to this by making wines that are much more approachable earlier.

[Continued on next page]



2005 WINNER

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

OUT IN PINOT COUNTRY

[Continued from previous page]

Most people never get the chance to taste just how good that bottle of Pinot on the table can taste. How many times have you pulled a bottle from your cellar (or purchased it at your local wine shop), pulled the cork, poured it out for yourself and your guests and immediately began drinking it—with dinner or by itself? You and your friends probably finished the bottle within an hour or so.

Well, guess what? You probably missed out on most of what that Pinot had to offer.

Try an experiment. Open a bottle of Pinot. Try a taste right away. Then leave the bottle open and walk away for at least an hour. Then try the wine again, and again after two hours. In almost every case, that Pinot will have blossomed in the glass and added dimensions and layers of flavor that simply weren't there when you first tasted the wine.

Depending on the Pinot, you might even want to splash decant the wine—that is, pour the wine vigorously into a decanter or some other container. **The splashing aerates the Pinot and helps it open up even faster.** You don't need to leave it in the decanter, go ahead and pour it back into the bottle.

If you're at a restaurant, it can be even tougher to get the wine enough air to open it up. Whether you order a bottle of Pinot off the list or bring your own bottle, have the server open it right away and even pour it into glasses while you decide on a white wine to get things started. Or, if it's a special dinner for two or 20, call the restaurant ahead and see if they can open the wine you'd like to serve an hour before you get there.

As anxious as you may be to drink that Pinot, you will find that your patience will be rewarded if you plan ahead, get that bottle of great Pinot open and then stand back and give it some air!

Corrections & Updates

The following are corrections to items in the last issue (#43). I apologize for the errors.

In the **"In The Market"** section, the winery description for **Chalone Vineyard** incorrectly listed **Dan Karlsen** as Chalone's winemaker. Dan left Chalone recently to **start his own venture** and continues to make wine for the **Graff Family** and **A Frame** labels.

In my roundup **"2007 Explodes With Pinot Events,"** I inadvertently left out two events that are definitely worthy of your attention:

Marin County Pinot Noir Celebration June 8-9, 2007

This is a great event showcasing the wines from an emerging region for Pinot Noir: **Marin County.** Producers who will be pouring new and library releases as well as some 2006 barrel samples include **Brookside Cellars, Corda Winery, Dutton-Goldfield, Kendric Vineyards, Moon Hill Vineyard, Orogeny, Pey-Marin Vineyards, Point Reyes Vineyards, Sean Thackrey, Stubbs Vineyard, Thomas Fogarty Winery, Vergari Wines, Vision Cellars** and **Willowbrook Cellars.** The event is a production of the Marin County Winegrowers Association and benefits the Marin Agricultural Land Trust. **Information:** call **707.953.0923** or email marinpinot@devilsgulchranch.com.

Santa Rita Hills Wine & Fire June 22-24, 2007

The second annual Wine & Fire event is a terrific, intimate event where you can really explore the wines and wineries in the **Santa Rita Hills** wine region. To keep the event intimate, only a limited number of tickets will be sold. Friday night opens the event with a wine reception; Saturday brings the "Trial By Fire" tasting seminars featuring panels of area winemakers. Following the seminars is a rancho-inspired gourmet lunch. Various area wineries will host dinners and open houses that night and on Sunday. **Information:** visit www.staritahills.com.

In This Issue

This issue I offer a wrap report on the seventh annual **World of Pinot Noir** event. This event really does get better every year. The regular "In The Market" section includes some really terrific wines from **Chehalem, Etude, Fess Parker, Hamacher, Marimar Estate, Miller Wine Works, Pey-Marin, Testarossa** and **Willakenzie Estate.**

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

-- Gregory S. Walter, editor and publisher

Gaia/Ashley's Vineyard Sold Again

Foley Estate Vineyards & Winery is the new owner of the **Gaia Vineyard**, formerly known as **Ashley's Vineyard**, in the **Santa Rita Hills** region. The vineyard is just down the road from the Foley Estate winery on Highway 246. Foley Estate owner **William Foley** purchased the vineyard from Santa Monica real estate developer **John Zahoudanis**, who purchased it in 2005 for his **Demetria Estates** winery. The purchase price has been reported as \$12.5 million. The 213-acre vineyard, planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, was previously known as Ashley's Vineyard when it was owned by the **Fess Parker Winery**. Foley purchased the vineyard primarily and a grape source for his **Lincourt** label and is naming the Pinot Noir section **Lindsay's Vineyard** while the Chardonnay section will be known as **Courtney's Vineyard** after his two daughters.

Terry Nolan Joins Owl Ridge

Terry Nolan is the new general manager of the crush and cellar division of **Owl Ridge Wine Services**, the custom crush and winemaking operation located north of **Sebastopol**. Nolan comes to Owl Ridge after a short stint at **Rutz Cellars** and prior to that, 13 years as director of winemaking for **Benziger Family Winery** in Glen Ellen.

Green Valley AVA Changes Name

Federal regulators have approved a petition to change the official name of the American Viticultural Area (AVA) known informally as **Green Valley** from "**Sonoma County Green Valley**" to "**Green Valley of Russian River Valley**." The name change is effective this month. Eight Green Valley wineries pushed for and endorsed the name change petition: **De Loach Vineyards**, **Dutton Estate**, **Dutton-Goldfield**, **Emeritus**, **Hartford Court**, **Iron Horse Vineyard**, **Marimar Estate** and **Orogeny**. The Green Valley AVA is located in the southwestern part of the **Russian River Valley**, bounded by the towns of Sebastopol, Forestville and Occidental.

Willamette Valley Leases Elton Vineyard

Oregon Pinot producer **Willamette Valley Vineyards** has announced a long-term and eventually exclusive lease on **Elton Vineyard** located in the **Eola Hills** west of **Salem**,

Oregon. **Elton Vineyard** was established in 1983 by **Dick and Betty O'Brien** and consists of 60 acres, 42 of which are planted to Pinot Noir. **Ken Wright**, **Bethel Heights** and California's **Fiddlehead Cellars** are among the producers sourcing the grapes. **Willamette Valley Vineyards**, Oregon's only publicly traded winery (NASDAQ: WVTI), will assume exclusive rights to the fruit once existing grape contracts run their course and also has the right of first refusal should the O'Briens decide to sell the vineyard in the future.

PINOT EVENTS

West Chester, PA

May 1, 2007: Pacific Pinot Noir. Join Allyson Boulliane (Capital Wine & Spirits) and explore the many flavors and aromas of Pinot Noir. Each wine will be paired with a course of complementary food by Chef Aaron Wilson. **Where:** Dilworthtown Inn, 1390 Old Wilmington Pike, West Chester, PA 19382. **Time:** 7 p.m. **Price:** \$75.00 **Information:** call 610.399.1390 or visit www.dilworthtown.com.

New York City

May 1, 2007: Arcadian Winery Wine Dinner at Craft Restaurant. Taste spectacular Pinots from Arcadian Winery and some of the best vineyards in California and learn from one of the most knowledgeable winemakers in Pinot today. All the wines will be paired with Craft Restaurant's cuisine. **Where:** Craft Restaurant, 43 East 19th Street, New York, NY 10003. **Time:** 7 p.m. **Price:** \$195.00 **Information:** contact Irene Costello, 212.400.6512, icostello@craftrestaurant.com or visit www.craftrestaurant.com.

Saratoga, CA

May 6, 2007: New Release Pinot Tasting with Sonnet Wine Cellars. Sonnet Cellars winemaker Tony Craig makes elegant Pinot Noirs. Taste four new release Pinots from the 2005 vintage: Amber Ridge Vineyard (Russian River Valley), Muns Vineyard (Santa Cruz Mountains), Tondre Grapefield (Santa Lucia Highlands) and Kruse Vineyard (York Mountain). **Where:** Uncorked!, 14500 Big Basin Way, Saratoga, CA 95070. **Time:** 6 p.m. **Price:** \$10.00 **Information:** call 408.741.9000.

Walnut Creek, CA

May 9, 2007: Prima's Annual Celebration of Pinot Noir. Seven of Pinot Noirs most ardent advocates will be pouring their wares alongside an enticing menu of Pinot-friendly specialties. **Where:** Prima Ristorante, 1522 North Main, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. **Time:** 6:30 p.m. **Price:** 125.00 **Information:** call 925.945.1800.

[PNR]

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 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 Dundee Hills Stoller Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; spicy, some earth and cherry aromas; ripe, earthy, spicy flavor, silky texture, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Beautiful aromas and flavors mark this as a Pinot that's as good by itself and with a meal.

440 cases made \$39 Score: 93

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Ribbon Ridge Ridgecrest Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy, herbal notes; ripe, herbal, dried cherries, complex, earthy notes; sweet oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and delicious Pinot with a great palette of interesting aromas and flavors.

438 cases made \$39 Score: 92

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Pretty amazing Pinot..."

Pey-Marin Vineyards

Pinot Noir Marin County 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy, earthy, forest floor aromas, good core of cherry fruit; deep, rich, complex earthy, dusty cherry and forest floor flavors, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. WOW! This is a pretty amazing Pinot from an emerging Pinot region that you should be paying attention to.

372 cases made \$36 Score: 94

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Corral Creek 2004

Medium ruby color; ripe, cherry, earthy and spice aromas; ripe, rich, good cherry flavors, earthy and slightly herbal notes, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. A very pretty Pinot with just the right balance of bright cherry and earthy complexity to work well on the table.

200 cases made \$39 Score: 91

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 3 Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, complex aromas with cherry and earthy notes; rich and ripe, complex cherry and earthy notes with forest floor and sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex and interesting, this Pinot has a lot of depth and nuance.

2,472 cases made \$27 Score: 92

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Reserve 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy aromas with dusty cherry and herbal notes; deep, rich, dusty cherry flavors with earthy, herbal notes; sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and complex with a great core of cherry fruit—great for grilled meats.

362 cases made \$60 Score: 92

Etude

Etude began in 1982 as the creative dream of Tony Soter, then a successful consulting winemaker for clients such as Araujo Estate, Dalla Valle, Neibaum-Coppola, Spottswoode and Viader in the Napa Valley. Tony built relationships with key growers and started making intense and interesting Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Noir. Tony sold Etude in 2001 to Beringer Blass Wine Estates. He stayed on as

SMART BUY!

"Ripe and interesting..."

Willakenzie Estate

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, herbal, dusty cherry aromas; herbal, earthy flavors with dusty cherry, sweet oak and some tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and interesting Pinot with a lot of complex herbal and earthy notes.

3,774 cases made \$23 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

a consultant to continue to guide the brand and the wines. In 2000 Beringer Blass began planting a new Pinot Noir vineyard on the western edge of Carneros just south of the Sonoma Valley and right in the path of the cooling coastal fog. These vineyards would eventually become the estate fruit source for Etude. In 2003 Beringer Blass purchased the closed RMS Distillery in Carneros and refitted it to be the new home of Etude. Today, Tony works with winemaker Jon Priest to craft the winery's excellent Pinot bottlings: a Carneros blend and the Heirloom bottling. The Etude Pinots are intense with lots of cherry and earthy notes and excellent balance.

Etude

Pinot Noir Carneros Heirloom 2003

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy, earthy aromas; big, complex, deep stewed cherry flavors, spicy and earthy flavors; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. This is a very deep and complex Pinot—it's what you'd expect from this Heirloom bottling. Delicious now, but definitely will continue to improve.

924 cases made \$80 Score: 93

Fess Parker Winery

Most people, when they hear the name "Fess Parker," think instantly of his television roles: Davy Crockett or Daniel Boone. What they don't usually think of is the vintner and entrepreneur. Since 1989, Fess Parker and his son Eli have farmed more than 700 acres of vineyards in Santa Barbara County and run Fess Parker Winery. Eli Parker has since taken over as winemaker and president of the winery. Now Fess' daughter Ashley is also a partner in the winery, handling public relations and marketing. The Fess Parker estate Pinot vineyards have traditionally included Marcella's Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley and the Ashley's Vineyard in the Santa Rita Hills. The Ashley's Vineyard was sold for the second time recently and is now owned by Foley Estates. Pinot bottlings include a Santa Barbara County blend, and vineyard designates including Bien Nacido Vineyard.

Fess Parker Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard 2004

Deep ruby color; deep, earthy, spicy, cherry aromas; ripe, rich, great core of black cherry fruit, complex, with some delicate earthy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. A more delicate style of Pinot, this wine from Fess Parker really shines on the table.

493 cases made \$50 Score: 92

Fess Parker Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Ashley's Vineyard 2004

Deep ruby color; deep, spicy, lots of dusty plum and black cherry aromas; big, rich, lot of deep, black cherry and plum fruit, moderate tannin, sweet oak, good structure and balance;

long finish. Big and deep style of Pinot with a great core of fruit; serve with a big steak.

495 cases made \$50 Score: 91

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

Financier William P. Foley, founder of Fidelity National Corporation, had a dream of producing great wine near his home in Santa Barbara. His initial foray into making that dream come true was his purchase in 1997 of the historic J. Carey Cellars winery in the Santa Ynez Valley. He renamed that winery Lincourt (a combination of his two daughters' names). His Lincourt wines are made in that facility. He also wanted to produce great Chardonnay and Pinot Noir so after an extensive search he purchased a 430-acre former thoroughbred horse ranch in the Santa Rita Hills called Rancho Santa Rosa in 1998. He and winemaker Alan Phillips (formerly of Monticello Cellars in the Napa Valley and Byington in the Santa Cruz Mountains) set out to plant 230 acres of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and a small block of Syrah. Foley Estates Vineyard and Winery was born. The Foley Estates Pinots are rich, ripe and well structured, with a deep core of black cherry and plum fruit. Pinot bottlings include an Estate and Barrel Select bottlings as well as several clonal selection bottlings the winery calls "micro lots."

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa Clone 2A 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep black cherry and plum aromas with earthy, toasty oak notes; rich, ripe, deep black cherry and plum, earthy, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex and tasty Pinot with the structure to age.

249 cases made \$45 Score: 91

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa Pommard Clone 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; lush black cherry and spice aromas; rich, ripe, lush, black cherry and plum flavors; sweet oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Delicious and silky, this Pinot is a delight to drink by itself, but will pair well with anything from an earthy pasta to grilled meats.

151 cases made \$45 Score: 94

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; spicy, earthy, plum aromas; rich, ripe, spicy, plum flavors; sweet oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and ripe, with delicious spice and plum flavors. Ready for the table.

2,865 cases made \$38 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa Clone 667 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy, black cherry aromas with some toasty oak notes; ripe, full and deep, black cherry and sweet oak, some tannin, good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy style of Pinot with a lot of deep fruit to round it out.

214 cases made \$45 Score: 91

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa Barrel Select 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy, earthy aromas; rich, ripe, earthy and plum flavors; silky texture, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big and round with really deep black cherry fruit. Great for the table.

248 cases made \$50 Score: 92

Lincourt

Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy plum and cherry; ripe, earthy cherry flavors, spicy oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. An earthy style of Pinot with a nice core of fruit.

3,478 cases made \$22 Score: 91

Lincourt

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; spicy, cherry and plum aromas; ripe, lush black cherry flavors, earthy and spicy notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and tasty, this Pinot is well balanced and full of great fruit flavors.

159 cases made \$30 Score: 93

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Earthy and deep..."

Hamacher

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Durant Vineyard 2002

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, herbal and earthy aromas; deep, dusty cherry flavors, earthy, herbal notes with moderate tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy and deep, this Pinot definitely needs time to develop—it's complex with much potential ahead.

25 cases made \$60 Score: 94

Hamacher Wines

Winemaker Eric Hamacher founded Hamacher Wines with his wife Luisa Ponzi (of Ponzi Vineyards) in 1995 to make Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Production is small, only about 2,000 cases per year. Eric is a true minimal intervention winemaker and strives to make supple and elegant Pinots. Eric, his wife Luisa in partnership with Ned and Kirsten Lumpkin, owners of a vineyard and a construction company, created the Carlton Winemakers Studio in the small town of Carlton to build sustainable or "green" winery that in addition to housing Eric's wines would be a nearly ideal location for several other small production wineries to operate independently while sharing the same state of the art equipment. Hamacher Wines produces two Pinot bottlings, the Willamette Valley blend and a vineyard designate from the Durant Vineyard. His Pinot style is one that achieves great complexity and depth through blending the best lots from top area several vineyards. Eric also produces excellent Chardonnay, and a second label of selected lots called H Wines.

Hamacher

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2002

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, earthy and cherry aromas; deep, sour cherry flavors with complex earthy notes; toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big and complex, this wine is just beginning to show its potential. It needs lots of air in the glass to open up.

1,150 cases made \$40 Score: 93

Hamacher

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Durant Vineyard 2002

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

H Wines

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy, stewed cherry aromas; rich,

SMART BUY!

"Bright flavors..."

Harlow Ridge Winery

Pinot Noir Lodi 2005

Medium ruby color; rich, bright cherry aromas; rich and ripe cherry fruit, spice and earthy notes, good structure and balance; long finish. Good middle of the road Pinot; bright fruit, great for lighter dishes.

n/a cases made \$10 Score: 91

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

ripe, earthy flavors, stewed cherry, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big and rich with a lot of interesting flavors—great for the table and a wide variety of dishes.

352 cases made \$20 Score: 92

Harlow Ridge

Harlow Ridge is a label owned and produced by Fred Franzia's Bronco Wine Company, one of the largest wine producers in the country and the creator of the "Two Buck Chuck" phenomenon. Harlow Ridge Pinots generally carry a Lodi appellation and sell for around \$10 per bottle. The wines are great values and tend toward lighter body and nice, balanced flavors.

Harlow Ridge Winery

Pinot Noir Lodi 2005

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 6.

Kendall-Jackson

Jess Jackson's Kendall-Jackson winery is one of the largest wine brands in the country and also one of the largest that is still a family-owned and operated business. Jess Jackson, raised in San Francisco and graduated from UC Berkeley's Boalt Law School, purchased an 80-acre pear and walnut orchard in Lakeport, Calif., in 1974. He converted the orchard to a vineyard and by 1982 produced his first bottle of wine under the Kendall-Jackson label. Today, the Jess Jackson umbrella includes several other Pinot producers: Cambria Vineyard & Winery, Hartford Court and La Crema. Pinot bottlings under the Kendall-Jackson label include Vintner's Reserve, Grand Reserve and the Highlands Estate bottling. These are all great values and solid, interesting Pinots.

Kendall-Jackson

Pinot Noir California Vintners Reserve 2005

Medium ruby color; earthy, some cherry aromas; ripe, cherry flavors with earthy, slightly toasty notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Good medium bodied Pinot with pleasing flavors that will work well with most foods.

n/a cases made \$14 Score: 88

Kendall-Jackson

Pinot Noir Monterey County Grand Reserve 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy, stewed cherry aromas; ripe, earthy stewed cherry flavors, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Nice, balanced Pinot with complex cherry flavors.

n/a cases made \$30 Score: 89

Laetitia Vineyard & Winery

The wine estate that is now Laetitia Vineyard & Winery, located in the Arroyo Grande Valley south of San Luis Obispo, was born in 1982, when Champagne Deutz in partnership with Beringer Wine Estates and vineyard owner Jean-Claude Tardivat, planted approximately 185 acres of Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Noir and for the next 13 years, produced delicious California sparkling wines. Tardivat bought out his partners in 1997 and renamed the winery Laetitia, after his daughter. Tardivat shifted the focus away from sparkling wine hoping that the site would be as suitable to still Pinot Noirs. He was right. In 2001, current owner and entrepreneur Selim Zilkha purchased Laetitia. Winemaker Eric Hickey's excellent Pinot offerings include an estate bottling, a reserve bottling (made up of the best lots from the estate) and single vineyard bottlings that highlight specific blocks in the estate vineyard. Laetitia is also the parent company of Barnwood Vineyards and Avila Winery.

Laetitia Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Arroyo Grande La Colline 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy, toasty cherry aromas; rich, ripe stewed cherry flavors, earthy, spicy flavors, toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, full style of Pinot, this wine really calls out for a roasted chicken.

440 cases made \$60 Score: 92

Laetitia Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Arroyo Grande Les Galets 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; spicy, rich and ripe black cherry aromas; ripe cherry flavors, spicy, earthy flavors, silky texture, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and ripe Pinot with lots of depth and complexity.

440 cases made \$60 Score: 93

Marimar Estate

Marimar Torres has been involved in the wine business all her life. Born in Barcelona, Spain, her family's Torres wine company has been in the global wine business for three centuries. Marimar came to California in 1975 and after two years of searching acquired the land and created the Marimar Estate in the Green Valley appellation of western Sonoma County. Marimar Estate's has two vineyards Don Miguel Vineyard, named for her late father, and Doña Margarita Vineyard, after her mother. Marimar Estate produces Chardonnay and Pinot Noir—the Pinots are deep, with lush cherry notes and fine, elegant structure and balance. Three Pinot bottlings are produced: an estate bottling, the "Cristina," bottling, named for Marimar's daughter, and the Earthquake Block bottling, a special selection from a vineyard block that was so damaged by erosion one year it looked like the ground

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

had been split open by an earthquake.

Marimar Estate

Pinot Noir Green Valley Dona Margarita 2004

Medium ruby red color; deep, spicy, earthy, some cherry and forest floor aromas; complex, big and full, black cherry, earth and spice flavors, moderate tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big style of Pinot with ample fruit to support it. Needs time in the bottle and time in the glass to fully open.

655 cases made \$45 Score: 91

Marimar Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Don Miguel Vineyard 2003

Medium ruby color; deep red cherry, and forest floor aromas; rich, deep red cherry and earthy flavors; spice and sweet oak notes; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and intense Pinot that's also silky and elegant.

3,072 cases made \$35 Score: 92

Marimar Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Don Miguel Vineyard Cristina Selection 2003

Medium ruby red color; deep, earthy, spicy, just a bit closed; ripe, earthy, red cherry and spice flavors, moderate tannin, toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and complex style of Pinot with moderate tannin, but the balance to allow it to age and develop further.

400 cases made \$47 Score: 92

Miller Wine Works

Gary Miller is a chef and a winemaker, and he finds tremendous synergy and commonality between the two pursuits. He found his passion for wine in college while working in a wine shop near Purdue University and took a detour into food with study at the Culinary Institute of America and work in kitchens at the Greenbrier in West Virginia and the Little Nell in Aspen. He ended up in the Napa Valley and with some encouragement from friends, launched Miller Wine Works to make the kind of wines that have affinity and synergy with great food. His Pinot Noir from the Hellenthal Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast is such a wine—nicely balanced with subtle and complex flavors. Miller Wine Works is one of those under-the-radar producers that you should get to know before everyone else does.

Miller Wine Works

Pinot Noir Marin County Kendric Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; earthy, some forest floor, dusty cherry aromas; rich, ripe, lots of red cherry and earthy, forest floor

flavors; slight tannin, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Very complex and full of nuance, this Pinot calls for a earthy mushroom pasta dish.

133 cases made \$36 Score: 91

Pey-Marin Vineyards

Husband and wife team Jonathan and Susan Pey have made a definitive statement about the quality of Pinot Noir possible in the western reaches of Marin County. They launched the Pey-Marin label to make Pinot Noir from their estate vineyards, located less than eight miles (as the crow flies) from the Pacific Ocean. They also make a terrific dry Riesling under the Pey-Marin label. The pair's other label, Mount Tamalpais, is for Merlot and a Vin Gris. Jonathan Pey has worked in France with Domaine Louis Jadot and Chateau de Pommard, with Robert Mondavi Winery and Sterling Vineyards in the Napa Valley, and with Penfolds in Australia. Susan Pey works as a senior wine buyer in the restaurant business. The Pey-Marin "Trois Filles" is named for the Peys three daughters and is an elegant, expressive Pinot with silky texture and great structure. Get on this winery's list fast and keep your eyes open for their Marin Pinots.

Pey-Marin Vineyards

Pinot Noir Marin County 2004

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

Russian Hill

Ed Gomez and Ellen Mack began their journey in wine making Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay under their Benicia Cellars label in the Solano County city of Benicia. Both severely bitten by the wine bug, they wanted to continue making wine, but also wanted to have a property that would be a suitable place to plant an estate vineyard. They established the Russian Hill Estate in 1997 on 21 acres of low hills in the Russian River Valley on Slusser Road next door to Sonoma-Cutrer. The property came with an estate house known to locals by the nickname "Tara" and from there came the name of their 20-acre estate vineyard, Tara Vineyard. Planted in 1998 to Pinot Noir, Syrah and a small amount of Viognier (that's co-fermented with the Syrah), the Tara Vineyard is mostly east facing. Russian Hill has a second vineyard, Sunny View Vineyard, located on Guerneville Road approximately six miles south of the winery, with 15 acres planted to Pinot and five to Viognier. Ed's nephew, Patrick Melley, is Russian Hill's winemaker. Mostly self-taught, Patrick has really dialed in a Russian Hill style that's really all about a great core of fruit, balance and terrific texture and mouthfeel. Currently Russian Hill produces five bottlings of Pinot Noir, a Syrah and a Chardonnay.

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Russian Hill

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; rich spicy, earthy red cherry aromas, rich spice, cinnamon, cherry and earthy flavors; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. A spicy, delicious Pinot that's just plain tasty.

1,499 cases made \$30 Score: 91

Russian Hill

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Estate Vineyard 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, spicy, dusty cherry aromas; deep red cherry, spice and forest floor flavors with sweet oak, silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and delicious, this is not only a great Pinot, it's a great value too.

824 cases made \$32 Score: 93

Russian Hill

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Tara Vineyard 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dense, cherry and earth aromas; deep and complex with forest floor, dark cherry and lots of sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Great structure and depth with amazingly complex flavors. Needs lots of air to open up.

395 cases made \$42 Score: 95

Russian Hill

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Leras Vineyard 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, spicy cinnamon and earthy aromas; rich, deep and ripe with red cherry, cinnamon, spice and earthy flavors, some toasty oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Amazing depth and great structure make this a Pinot for the cellar.

144 cases made \$40 Score: 94

Russian Hill

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Meredith Vineyard 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex black cherry and forest floor aromas; complex, deep black cherry flavors with forest floor, earthy notes; sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. A big and rich style of Pinot with a lot of the deep, complex black cherry fruit you expect from the Meredith Vineyard and a silkiness you expect from Russian Hill.

273 cases made \$42 Score: 93

Sonnet Wine Cellars

Tony Craig has come a long way from his previous life as a Shakespearean actor from the English town of Newcastle.

Prior to founding Sonnet, Tony spent 12 years as the winemaker at David Bruce Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains; he's currently also winemaker at Savannah-Chanelle winery. Tony's Sonnet Pinots are rich, elegant and really nicely balanced. His bottlings are from three vineyards: the Tondre Grapefield in Santa Lucia Highlands, Amber Ridge Vineyard in Russian River Valley and Kruse Vineyard in the York Mountain region near Paso Robles. These Pinots are definitely hard to find and worth the search.

Sonnet Wine Cellars

Pinot Noir York Mountain Kruse Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; herbs, spice, some cherry/berry aromas; ripe, rich, stewed cherry flavors, with earthy and spicy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Nicely complex with silky texture; you may want to drink it by itself.

375 cases made \$40 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Rob and Diana Jensen founded Testarossa in 1993 and quite literally have not looked back. Their passion for wine in general and Pinot Noir in particular has driven them to find and secure some of the best Pinot vineyard sources California has to offer and then deliver wines scoring among the highest anywhere. Neither Rob nor Diana have a winemaking or industry background. In fact, both have worked mainly in high-tech sales and marketing jobs in Silicon Valley. Rob developed his love of wine in his university days in Italy. Years later, he and Diana started Testarossa as a small weekend project. Today, they run the winery full time. Testarossa's winemaker is Bill Brosseau and the Pinot bottlings are sourced from vineyards up and down the West Coast. The Pinots are wonderful expressions of both the individual vineyard character and the Jensens' vision for what Pinot should be.

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir California Cuvee Niciare 2004

Medium ruby color; spicy, earthy cherry aromas; rich and ripe with bright cherry fruit, spicy and earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and spicy, this is a delicious Pinot for the table.

197 cases made \$75 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Chalone Brosseau Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy, cherry aromas with some herbal notes; rich, ripe with moderate tannin, deep cherry flavors, herbal notes, some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big style with moderate tannins, but also balanced with complex earthy and fruit notes.

173 cases made \$54 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Fritschen Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, stewed cherry aromas, earthy and smoky notes; rich and ripe, stewed cherry, earthy, smoky notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky and very tasty, this Pinot has great texture and delicious flavors.

176 cases made \$54 Score: 93

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains Schultze Family Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy, some juicy cherry aromas; rich, ripe and full with juicy cherry flavors, spicy, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and ripe, this is a delicious Pinot full of juicy red cherry flavors.

196 cases made \$54 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy spicy aromas; ripe and earthy with a great core of cherry fruit; deep and complex, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and earthy with complex and deep flavors; great with grilled meats.

696 cases made \$54 Score: 93

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Pisoni Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; earthy, cherry aromas; rich and ripe, with bright red cherry fruit and earthy notes, silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Lighter, more elegant style of Pinot that's a real pleasure to sip on its own.

289 cases made \$54 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast La Cruz Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; earthy, stewed cherry and plum aromas; ripe, deep, great core of stewed cherry flavors, complex, some tannin, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and deep, this is a complex and interesting Pinot.

344 cases made \$54 Score: 93

Willakenzie Estate

Burgundian native Bernard Lacroute decided, after a successful career in the high-tech industry, that he wanted to grow Pinot Noir in Oregon. He and his wife Ronni set out to find the right site and in 1991 after seeing an ad for a 420-acre cattle ranch in Yamhill, Oregon, they visited the site, purchased it and Willakenzie was born. The winery name is derived from the predominant soil type—Willakenzie—of the site and the

area. They began planting vineyards in 1992 and built a gravity fed winery in 1995. Today, the vineyard comprises more than 100 acres of mostly Pinot Noir. Wines produced include Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Meunier and Pinot Noir. Pinot bottlings include a regional Willamette Valley bottling and estate bottlings named Kiana, Alette, Emery, Pierre Leon, Terres Basses and Triple Black Slopes.

Willakenzie Estate

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2004

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 4.

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines reviewed in this issue.

Chehalem

503.538.4700, www.chehalemwines.com

Etude

707.257.5300, www.etudewines.com

Fess Parker Winery

805.688.1545, www.fessparker.com

Foley Estates Vineyard & Winery

805.688.8554, www.foleywines.com

Hamacher Wines

503.852.7500, www.hamacherwines.com

Harlow Ridge

800.692.5780

Kendall-Jackson

707.525.6283, www.kj.com

Laetitia Vineyard & Winery

805.481.1772, www.laetitiawine.com

Marimar Estate

707.823.4365, www.marimarestate.com

Miller Wine Works

707.254.9727, www.millerwineworks.com

Pey-Marin Vineyards

415.455.9463, www.marinwines.com

Russian Hill

707.575.9428, www.russianhillwinery.com

Sonnet Wine Cellars

408.353.4250, www.sonnetwinecellars.com

Testarossa Vineyards

408.354.6150, www.testarossa.com

Willakenzie Estate

503.662.4727, www.willakenzie.com

[PNR]

World of Pinot Noir Wrap Up...

Annual Central Coast Event Gets Better and Better

I ATTENDED THE SEVENTH ANNUAL WORLD OF PINOT NOIR event in March at the Cliffs Resort in Shell Beach on California's Central Coast. This is my fifth World of Pinot Noir event and to say that it's the best ever is kind of trite and worn out; but the fact is that this event has always been at the top of its game and getting better. This year was no exception.

As has become the norm for World of Pinot's early March event date, the weather overlooking the Pacific Ocean was spectacular – crystal clear, sunny days with wispy high cirrus clouds that made for some amazing sunsets. Nights were crisp and cold—a reminder that winter was not quite over.

The event officially kicked off Friday morning as attendees split into three groups for the day's seminar programs. One group stayed at the **Cliffs Resort** for **"New World Wines and New World Cheeses—An Artisanal Pairing,"** where moderators Master Sommelier **Fred Dame** and **Kent Torrey** of **The Cheese Shop**, Carmel led a panel of winemakers and cheese producers in a tasting and discussion of pairing artisan cheeses and Pinot Noir.

The two other groups boarded buses and headed out for their seminar programs. One group headed down to **Byron Vineyard & Winery** in the **Santa Maria Valley** for a pair of seminars. The first, **"The New Frontiers of Pinot Noir—New & Emerging AVAs"** was moderated by **Patrick Comiskey**, critic-at-large for **Wine & Spirits** magazine and contributor to the **Los Angeles Times** and featured a panel of winemakers and vineyardists with a goal of discovering what the next generation of Pinot Noir will bring. The second seminar was a walking tour of **Byron's Nielsen Vineyard**, the oldest Pinot Noir vineyard in Santa Barbara County, conducted by Byron winemaker **Jonathan Nagy**.

I was part of the third group—our bus headed down the highway to nearby **Arroyo Grande** and the **Laetitia Vineyard & Winery** where the day's program included the **"Pioneers of Pinot Noir"** seminar and a **"Laetitia Block Party"**—an examination of the various vineyard blocks at the vineyard estate. Moderated by wine writer **Anthony Dias Blue**, the **"Pioneers of Pinot Noir"** seminar featured panelists **David Hirsch** of **Hirsch Vineyards** (Sonoma Coast), **Larry Hyde** of **Hyde Vineyards** (Carneros), **Josh Jensen** of **Calera Wine Company** (San Benito County) and **Richard Sanford** of **Alma Rosa Winery** (Santa Rita Hills).

[Continued on next page]



"I say this every year because I can't think of a better way to say it: There's no question in my mind that if you're serious about Pinot Noir you need to attend this event."

How To Attend ...

If you'd like more information on World of Pinot Noir or would like to register for future WOPN events, here's the contact information for the event:

World Of Pinot Noir
PO Box 1346
Arroyo Grande, CA 93421
Tel: 805.489.1758
Email: info@wopn.com
Web: www.wopn.com



PINOT EVENTS

[Continued from previous page]

Asked about what led these Pinot pioneers to their particular sites, **David Hirsch**, whose Hirsch Vineyard is located high on the coastal ridges in what's being referred to more and more as the "True Sonoma Coast," was the first to respond. "I wasn't really looking for a place to plant Pinot," he said. "It was the 1970s and I was looking for a place out away from everything. I was standing in a sheep field with my friend **Jim Beauregard** (of Beauregard Vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains) and he said 'if you plant Pinot Noir here, you will have a world renowned vineyard.' He was right."

Larry Hyde searched for a long time for the site for his Hyde Vineyard site located along Highway 121 in the Napa side of Carneros. The shallow soils and gradually sloped southeastern exposure were keys to the decision to plant there. He really looks at his vineyard—and vineyards in general—as "multi-generational things: the son gets to see and study what the father did wrong and then fix it."

Josh Jensen pioneered Pinot Noir in a truly out of the way site in the mountains south of the town of **Hollister** in **San Benito County**, east of the Salinas Valley. Following his education in history and anthropology at **Yale** and later **Oxford** universities, he developed a love and fascination for Burgundy and its wines. He decided to turn that fascination into a career and worked harvests in 1970 and 1971 at **Domaine de la Romanée-Conti** and **Domaine Dujac**. He returned to California in 1971 to search for a site to create his own wine estate and Burgundian-styled wines. "The French said: 'you've got to find limestone.' No problem, I thought, it'll probably take a couple of weeks," Josh said. "Two years later, I found the limestone I wanted high in the **Gavilan Mountains**. It's been a wild ride, ever since."

Richard Sanford is in the process now of reinventing himself for at least the third time in his adult life. The first time was after the Vietnam War. "As I returned, I felt that the American culture had rejected me and as a result I rejected it," Richard said. It gave him an opportunity to reinvent himself and he went looking for a pursuit that would connect him more with the Earth. He wanted to "create something that would improve, not perish." By the early 1970s, he had settled on grapegrowing and had discovered the unique transverse valley that's now home to the **Santa Rita Hills**. In the early days, the local farmers thought he was crazy, driving up and down the

valley with a thermometer confirming what he suspected—that this would be an ideal place to plant Pinot Noir. He and a partner planted the **Sanford & Benedict Vineyard** and he later founded **Sanford Winery** where he continued to follow his dream for nearly three decades. After leaving Sanford in 2005, he established **Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards** with his wife and partner **Thekla Sanford**. With Alma Rosa, Richard and Thekla are producing Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris, **all in bottles finished with screwcaps**. His commitment to the environment is as strong as ever.

"Our ethical responsibility is to look to the future," Richard said. "We are farmers and while organic is not easy, sustainability is critical to our ethical and moral duty."

WINES TASTED

Hirsch Vineyards Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Madrone Ridge 2001: spicy, ripe red cherry aromas and flavors with some cola notes; silky, nicely developed, great structure and balance.

Hirsch Vineyards Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Estate 2002: ripe and rich, with spicy aromas and a touch of sassafras; rich and full cherry flavors, complex and deep, still developing.

Patz & Hall Pinot Noir Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2003: ripe, lush cherry aromas, deep dusty cherry and earthy notes, great structure; a Pinot that's just beginning to show what it has.

Patz & Hall Pinot Noir Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2005: bit closed and tight at this stage but you can sense the depth of fruit and complexity underneath. Needs time.

Calera Wine Co. Pinot Noir Mt. Harlan Jensen Vineyard 1993: deep, lots of earthy, stewed cherry aromas highlighted and fully developed because of bottle age; silky and earthy on the palate, great structure and long finish.

Calera Wine Co. Pinot Noir Mt. Harlan Jensen Vineyard 2003: seems tight and closed right now but there also seems to be a bunch of potential here.

Alma Rosa Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills 2005: ripe, full rich black cherry and spicy aromas; nice core of cherry flavors and terrific balance.

Alma Rosa Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills La Encantada Vineyard 2005: deep and a bit tight on nose; ripe, rich and full cherry flavors with earthy and pepper notes, great structure and balance.

After lunch, it was time for the **Laetitia Vineyard "Block Party"** seminar. Winery Owner **Nadia Wellisz**, Winemaker **Eric Hickey** and Winegrower **Lino Bozzano** led attendees on a progressive walking tour of two vineyard blocks on the

PINOT EVENTS

Laetitia estate and a tasting of the two Laetitia Pinot bottlings that come from those blocks, the **La Colline** and **Les Galets** bottlings.

Buses returned the wayward Pinot lovers back to the Cliffs Resort for the **“Pinot Noir Focus Tasting.”** This is a walkaround tasting held in two outdoor event tents on the bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. **About 60 Pinot producers** poured their new releases and some older wines as well. Usually a tasting like this means a lot of walking around, tasting, saying hello to winemakers I know and introducing myself to those I do not. At World of Pinot, however, I take a

different approach—the organizers are nice enough to allow me to have my own table so that I can “taste” people on the newsletter. It’s great for me because of course I’m interested in continuing to build my readership, but it’s also great because I get a chance to meet people who are already subscribers face to face.

I did get to sneak away a couple of times to taste some interesting Pinots from **Alta Maria Winery & Vineyards** (a new label from **James Ontiveros, Paul Wilkins** and **Sao Anash**), **Dierberg Vineyards**, **Flying Goat Cellars**, **Landmark Vineyards**, **Melville Winery**, **Native9**, **Papapietro Perry**, **Roessler Cellars**, **Sinor-LaVallee**, **Sojourn Cellars** and **Windward Vineyard**.

2007 WORLD OF PINOT NOIR

Gala Pinot Noir Dinner

Friday, March 2

Green Garlic and Hedgehog Mushroom Frittata with
Canestrato and Wild Arugula

Braised Pork Belly with White Runner Beans and Porcini

Venison Chop on Olive Oil Potato Puree, Braised Fig
Compote and Brown Butter

Oro Blanco Grapefruit Granita with Crème de Bourgogne

Rustic Apple Tarts with Caramel Sauce and Crème Fraiche
Ice Cream

Chef

Mark Peel, Campanile, Los Angeles

Wines That Made Their Way To Our Table: *(Pinot Noir unless otherwise noted)*

Copain Anderson Valley Hein Vineyard 2001

Dry Gully Central Otago 2002

Fiddlehead Cellars Santa Rita Hills Fiddlestix Vineyard
“728” 2003

Fiddlehead Cellars Santa Rita Hills Fiddlestix Vineyard
“Lollapalooza” 2000

Fiddlehead Cellars Willamette Valley Elton Vineyard 2002

Foxen Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Sea Smoke Vineyard 2003

Foxen Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Sea Smoke Vineyard 2004

Foxen Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Julia’s Vineyard 2005

Kawarau Central Otago 2004

Kawarau Central Otago 2005

Loring Wine Company Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella’s
Vineyard 2004

Native9 Santa Maria Valley 2004 in magnum

Native9 Santa Maria Valley 2005

Sineann Willamette Valley Resonance 2005

Sinor-LaVallee Edna Valley 2004

Friday Night: Fiddlestix!

The Friday night Gala Pinot Noir Dinner at World of Pinot Noir is always as much about the mixing and meeting all of the people attending as it is about the food and the wine. That having been said, it’s tough enough to pull off a five-course dinner for more than 300 people. But when you add the complications of seemingly unlimited bottles of Pinot needing to be opened and served and diners who are constantly getting up, wandering around and mingling throughout the evening, it would seem to be almost unmanageable for any hotel banquet staff.

The staff at the Cliffs Resort pulled it off better this year than any year so far. Dinner was great; wine and wine service was great and the people I got to meet and talk to were incredible. **About 30 wineries host tables** at the dinner and provide their Pinots for service during the dinner. A lot of the dinner attendees also bring their own supply of Pinot to share with their tablemates and beyond.

I was lucky enough to get assigned to the table hosted by **Kathy Joseph**, owner and winemaker at **Fiddlehead Cellars**. Kathy’s winery is located in the **“Wine Ghetto” of Lompoc** in the **Santa Rita Hills** and she makes Pinot from her Fiddlestix Vineyard there as well as from vineyards in the **Willamette Valley in Oregon**. We had a great table with lots of interesting wines and many visitors bearing even more Pinot to taste.

Our table was right next to a table with **Andy and Penny Loving** of **Station Imports** in **Boulder, Colorado**. The Lovings represent and import a great portfolio of Pinot Noir

PINOT EVENTS

from New Zealand and we were actively trading bottles between our tables.

Chef Mark Peel of **Campanile Restaurant** in Los Angeles was at the helm of the dinner and his classical training showed especially with the idea for the excellent, earthy and rich veal chop. Mark's resume includes early experience in two French Michelin three-star restaurants while with **Wolfgang Puck's Ma Maison**, to stints at **Chez Panisse** and **Spago** and finally to his own Campanile restaurant in Los Angeles. Chef Peel was assisted by **Cliffs Resort Chef Jose Garcia** and his team.

One final note on the dinner—there is a group of **dedicated sommeliers** who work tirelessly throughout the event, mostly without recognition, opening, testing and pouring the hundreds and hundreds of bottles of wine for the seminars and dinners. Take a look at the following list, you might see someone from a restaurant in your town: **Jason Alexander**, Gary Danko, San Francisco; **Chris Blanchard**, Redd, Yountville; **Joanna Breslin**, Ana Mandara, San Francisco; **Michael Chandler**, Enotria, Sacramento; **Brett Feore**, BLT, New York City; **Dan Fredman**, wine consultant, Malibu; **Peter Granoff MS**, Ferry Plaza Wine Merchants, San Francisco; **Paul Lato**, Talley Vineyards; **Thomas Perez**, Bouchee & L'Auberge Carmel, Carmel; **Jay Perrin**, Campanile, Los Angeles; **William Sherer MS**, Aureole, Las Vegas; **Jason Smith MS**, Michael Mina Group, Las Vegas; **Mitchell Sjerven MS**, Bouchon, Santa Barbara; **Matt Tunstall**, Jack Falstaff, San Francisco; **Wendy Van Horn**, Wine Cask, Santa Barbara; **Emily Wines**, Fifth Floor, San Francisco.

Saturday: Special Tastings

After a couple of cups of some good, strong coffee on Saturday morning we were ready to get started on another big day of Pinot Noir. And a big day it was going to be!

There were two seminars scheduled for Saturday morning. The first was a journey into the Burgundian side of Pinot Noir with **"The Wines of Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé and Domaine Michel Gros."** The seminar featured **Jean-Luc Pépin**, estate manager of Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé and **Michel Gros**, proprietor of Domaine Michel Gros, with **Allen Meadows** of the Burghound newsletter.

The second morning seminar was **"The Iron Sommelier Challenge."** This fun take on **Food Network's "Iron Chef"** program was a blind tasting challenge where the attendees

could pit their blind tasting abilities against a panel of top sommeliers.

Following lunch, it was time for the big-event tasting, the Saturday **"Pinot Noir by the Sea Tasting"** where more than 80 Pinot producers were pouring their wines for a near-capacity crowd. Again, I worked behind my **PinotReport** table for most of that tasting, but even so, **I had time to enjoy** some Pinots from **Ampelos Cellars, Ancien Wines, Arcadian Winery, Arista Winery, Bonaccorsi Wine Company, Buena Vista Carneros, Freeman Winery, Hitching Post Wines, J. Wilkes, Keller Estate, Ken Brown Wines, Kosta Browne, Lane Tanner, Loring Wine Company, MacPhail Family Wines, MacRostie Winery, Michaud Vineyards, Roar, Scott Paul and Tantara Winery.**

Party at the Paulée!

The semi-official wrap party for World of Pinot Noir is the **"Santa Barbara-Style Paulée Dinner"** hosted each year at **Jim Clendenen's Au Bon Climat** winery in the Santa Maria Valley.

It's not so much that it's a tremendous formal dinner chock full of amazing dishes and fabulous Pinot Noir—it's definitely not that. **It's actually a rockin' party chock full of amazing dishes and fabulous Pinot Noir.**

The WOPN Paulée is based on the Burgundian tradition of celebrating the end of harvest. Everyone brings a bottle (or six) of great Pinot to share; the winery is decked out with long family-style tables, each table covered with bottles of all sizes donated by the participating wineries. Strategically located around the interior of the winery are cooking stations for seven top chefs from around the country. The chefs for this year were **Maria Frumkin**, Duo, Miami; **Neal Frazer**, Grace Restaurant, Los Angeles; **Greg Higgins**, Higgins, Portland; **Dan Chudik**, Tuscan Express, Grand Rapids, Michigan; **Paolo Stoltz**, The Men's Club, Dallas; **Octavio Becerra**, Los Angeles; and **Cal Stamenov**, Marinus at Bernardus Lodge, Carmel, California. Add to this great lineup a DJ playing a diverse range of music—from dance to rock with the only common thread being that it was wonderfully loud.

There was so much great Pinot here (both domestic and that imported stuff) that it's hard to keep track of it all. The casual, festive atmosphere was the perfect close to a great weekend.

[PNR]

PINOTREPORT

For People Passionate About Western Pinot Noir

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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.

PINOTREPORT

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Email Address

BILLING ADDRESS

(You if credit card and/or gift; **where card statement is sent**)

Name

Company

Address

City, State Zip

Country

Phone (in case we have a question)

Email Address

(For gifts, attach any gift message to this form)

2. PAYMENT INFORMATION

CHECK payable to PINOTREPORT (US Funds)

VISA American Express Mastercard

Card Number

Expiration Date (MM/YY)

Card Verification Value (**Required** for credit card orders)*

* The Card Verification Value (CVV) is required by our bank as a security check for credit card orders. The CVV is a three-digit number printed on the signature panel on the BACK of your VISA or Mastercard just following your credit card number. American Express cards have a four-digit number printed on the FRONT of the card.

3. TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

Please tell us if you are a:

Consumer Distributor Sales

Wine retailer Winemaker

Restaurateur Marketing/PR

Winery Owner Wine Media

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ORDER!

Please complete the form above. If paying by check, make it payable to PinotReport and enclose form and payment in an envelope and mail to: PinotReport, PO Box 2051, Sonoma, CA 95476. You can also fax this form to 707.996.6735. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of first issue. If you have any questions, call 707.935.0326 or email gswalter@pinotreport.com.

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