

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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IN THE MARKET

Great Pinots to buy, drink now or add to your cellar.

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Don't Skip 2006 Pinots...

AS HARVEST FOR 2008 GETS UNDERWAY, I FIND MYSELF THINKING ABOUT RECENT PINOT NOIR VINTAGES. I'm doing a lot of talking and tasting with vintners—mostly tasting 2007 Pinots in barrel and talking about the prospects of the 2008 still on the vine. Their opinions (and mine so far) are that the 2007s will be a benchmark Pinot vintage for the West Coast and the 2008s that came through the various challenges that faced them—frost in the spring and some recent late summer heat spikes—will be quite good as well.

The biggest challenge of 2007 (and most likely 2008) for consumers will be finding the wines. Quantities for 2007 in particular looks pretty low, especially for wines that are traditionally highly allocated. You will most likely have trouble securing the wines you want to buy. 2008 Pinots may be similarly impacted.

Once you've managed to acquire those 2007s (probably six months to a year from now), your next challenge is to restrain yourself long enough to put the wines in your cellar and leave them there for a while. You do, of course, have a duty as a responsible cellar master to try the occasional bottle and make sure things are on track, but trust me, you want to wait—the 2007s will be well worth it.

A similar challenge is presented by the 2005 Pinots. Again, these are wines that will greatly benefit from patient cellaring.

So, if you're like me, you're wondering what to drink while you wait for the 2005s to get ready in the cellar and for the 2007s to arrive. Add to this the current state of the U.S. economy and contracting discretionary income for most of us and you're left with a related and equally important question: which Pinots can you buy and drink now that won't break the bank?

Let's look at the three vintages prior to 2007 and see where we stand.

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WINNER

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

OUT IN PINOT COUNTRY

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2004 Drinking Well Now

If you still have 2004 Pinots from California or Oregon, you should be trying them and if they are ready (as most should be) you should be drinking them. In California, these are big, intense, voluptuous Pinots with great cores of fruit, lots of forward complexing notes—they are simply delicious to drink. In Oregon, the best are balanced and deep with complex and interesting flavors. The best from up and down the coast will get better, but most are really drinking well now. If you are lucky enough to have a good supply of 2004s, you may be able to weather the storm until the 2005 and 2007 wines are ready. Finding 2004s in the marketplace is getting harder and harder.

2005 Buy And Hold

Before 2007 came along, 2005 was easily my favorite Pinot vintage this decade. It's still a very close second and for me it remains to be seen which one will ultimately win out. In Oregon, the Pinots have great structure, great balance, incredibly deep and complex flavors. The wines drink well on release but have years ahead of them. The best are among the best Oregon Pinots I've ever had and you should buy them while you can. For California, these are easily some of the best Pinots I've ever had. Amazing structure and balance, incredible flavor and depth; but the standout feature for me is the terrific structure of the wines. These are wines that will age well in the cellar, and because of their beautiful core of fruit and balance, will also drink well now when given plenty of air. Buy what you can, while you can!

2006 Buy 'em, Try 'em, Drink 'em

Pinots from this vintage have dominated my blind tastings lately. 2006 is the vintage currently in market and I have to tell you, my initial thoughts about this vintage when I tasted the wines in barrel are being confirmed with just about each wine I taste. Even though some of my wine writing colleagues have decreed a "thumbs down" toward the 2006 vintage, I have to respectfully (and enthusiastically) disagree. 2006 is a terrific vintage that produced delicious Pinot Noir. Like any vintage, there are ups and downs, but the downs in

2006 are far, far fewer in my opinion than other writers would lead you to believe.

As I did when I began tasting the 2006s—both in Oregon and California—I still believe that they are a great amalgam of the 2004 and 2005 vintages. They have great structure, but also a great core of deep fruit with a lot of complexity and nuance. Most are drinking really well right now and will continue to do so for years to come. Take a look at the tasting notes included in this issue—these wines are good representations of the wines in the marketplace.

The big bonus for 2006 is that this high quality comes with higher quantity as well due to an above average sized harvest. This means that many wines will be more available and in some cases more affordable.

With the economy where it is and markets down, there is wine in the pipeline that is not moving as fast as producers—and the rest of the distribution chain—would like. **To me the 2006 vintage represents a buying opportunity** not only because demand and pricing is softer, but also because in many ways it is the perfect bridge vintage. I can buy and drink the 2006s until the higher quality 2005s and 2007s are ready. That's what I plan to do.

Get Your Pinot On The River Tickets...

Tickets are selling fast for this year's Pinot On The River Festival, October 23-26, 2008 in the Russian River Valley. This is the event that I co-organize each year. This year is the fifth edition of the event and **our seminar program focuses on the 2007 vintage.** I would encourage you to attend this event as it is a truly great place to taste Pinots that you may not have the opportunity to taste. For more information on the event, drop me an email or visit www.pinotfestival.com.

Patrick Mullane Joins PinotReport

I'm really pleased to announce that my good friend **Patrick Mullane** has joined me here at **PinotReport** as a contributing editor. Patrick is a top-notch sommelier and wine consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area and you will begin to see his contributions in future issues.

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

-- Gregory S. Walter, editor and publisher

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

This Issue's Tasting Notes

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

Alfaro Family Vineyards

Richard Alfaro was well known in the Santa Cruz Mountains well before he ever began making wine there. For years he owned the Alfaro's Micro-Bakery in Santa Cruz before selling the business to Sara Lee in 1998. A wine nut even then, he began to search for the right place plant vineyards and make wine. He found that place in an old apple orchard near the town of Corralitos. Today, Richard's Alfaro Family Vineyards has four estate vineyards ranging in elevation from 400 to 850 feet. The Alfaro Family Vineyard is 16 acres and planted exclusively to Pinot Noir. The Lindsay Paige Vineyard (named after Richard's daughter) is seven acres and planted to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The Ryan Spencer Vineyard (named after Richard's son) is seven acres and planted to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Mary K's Vineyard (named for Richard's wife) is the newest vineyard and is planted on a steep terrace between 700 and 850 feet and is an even mix of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Pinot bottlings include vineyard designates from the Alfaro Family Vineyard and the Lindsay Paige Vineyard and an estate cuvee called "A." A related label, Martin Alfaro Wines, is a collaboration between Richard and Joseph Martin. Pinot bottlings for Martin Alfaro include vineyard designated wines from the nearby Schultze Family Vineyard, Gimelli Vineyard, Deer Park Vineyard, Garys' Vineyard, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard and Franscioni Vineyard. These are terrific wines worthy of your attention.

Alfaro Family Vineyards & Winery *Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains 2005*

Medium-deep ruby color; deep herbal berry aromas; deep, rich,

berry and herbal flavors with some tannin and good toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep flavors and solid toasty oak make this a Pinot that needs a hearty dish. It's just a tiny bit one-dimensional for me.

144 cases made \$33 Score: 88

Alfaro Family Vineyards & Winery *Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains A 2005*

Deep ruby color; deep, slightly jammy cherry/berry aromas; ripe, full flavors; lots of red cherry and berry with toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big and rich Pinot with a good dose of toasty oak.

351 cases made \$25 Score: 90

Martin Alfaro *Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains Deer Park Vineyard 2005*

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, toasty, spicy red cherry aromas; rich, ripe, lots of stewed red cherry and spice flavors; toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe Pinot with layers of interesting flavors.

114 cases made \$33 Score: 91

Martin Alfaro *Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains Schultze Family Vineyard 2005*

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, intense, spicy red cherry and herb aromas; deep, intense, dusty red cherry flavors with sweet spices, herbs, sweet oak and a silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky and complex; this Pinot drinks really well by itself, but would also be a great match for grilled meats or anything with mushrooms.

225 cases made \$33 Score: 92

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Amazingly deep and complex..."

Shea Wine Cellars *Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard East Hill 2006*

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy, herbal black cherry aromas; rich, ripe, deep dark cherry with cocoa notes; lush and silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Amazingly deep and complex Pinot with a beautifully lush and silky mouthfeel. Just makes you want to drink it up, but this is definitely a wine you want to let develop in the cellar.

370 cases made \$52 Score: 97

SMART BUY!

"Bright and flavorful..."

Roessler Cellars *Pinot Noir Sonoma County Red Label 2006*

Medium ruby color; bright, spicy strawberry and cherry aromas with some sweet oak; ripe, bright strawberry and cherry aromas with just enough earthiness and sweet oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and flavorful Pinot with great balance that's perfect just about anything on the table.

1,286 cases made \$28 Score: 93

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Martin Alfaro

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep spicy black cherry and earthy aromas; rich, ripe black cherry, spice, some earthy, smoky notes, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and smoky with great black cherry flavors make this a terrific Pinot for grilled meats.

225 cases made \$42 Score: 91

Martin Alfaro

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Sleepy Hollow Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy aromas with some black cherry; deep, intense black cherry and earthy flavors, some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and intense Pinot with great depth of flavors; will age well for a few years in the cellar.

225 cases made \$33 Score: 90

Departure Wine Company

Tim Grubb and brothers Jason Miele and PJ Miele launched Departure Wine Company several years after graduating from UC Santa Barbara primarily to make Rhone-style wines from selected vineyards in Santa Barbara County. They currently produce three bottlings of Syrah and one bottling of Pinot Noir. Tim Grubb is the winemaker. His Pinot bottling is from the Silacci Vineyard in Monterey County a few miles north of the boundaries for the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. It's an interesting wine—the Syrahs are definitely worth trying as well.

Departure Wine Company

Pinot Noir Central Coast Silacci Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; red cherry, earthy and spicy aromas; ripe, lighter bodied; rich red cherry and spice flavors; lingering finish. Lighter styled Pinot has rich, silky flavors—perfect for a lighter meal.

85 cases made \$38 Score: 88

Dobbes Family Estate

Joe Dobbes brings a long resume of experience to his own Oregon-based Dobbes Family Estate venture. His winemaking apprenticeships were in Germany (Wiengut Erbhof Tesch) and Burgundy (Domaine G. Roumier and Domaine Comtes Lafon); in Oregon he has worked for Elk Cove Vineyards, Eola Hills, Hinman/Sylvan Ridge, Paschal Winery and Willamette Valley Vineyards. In 2002 he created Wine by Joe LLC as an umbrella for three of his own labels: Dobbes Family, Wine by Joe and Jovino Pinot Noir. Under the Dobbes Family label he produces Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley and from the Rogue Valley in Southern Oregon. He also produces Syrah, Pinot Gris and Viognier. His Pinots are

texture-driven with a lot of interesting and complex flavors. Dobbes Family Pinot bottlings include blended Pinots—the Grand Assemblage, Griffins Cuvee and Skipper's Cuvee—and vineyard designates from the Quailhurst and Meyer vineyards in the Willamette Valley.

Dobbes Family Estate

Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Meyer Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex black cherry and earthy aromas; deep, rich, dense black cherry flavors with spice and sweet oak; bit closed; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and complex Pinot that needs some time to open in the glass and will take some cellar time.

42 cases made \$65 Score: 89

Dobbes Family Estate

Pinot Noir Oregon Grand Assemblage Cuvee 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, dark cherry, earth and spice aromas; deep, rich, dark cherry and spice flavors with sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe and balanced Pinot with a broad range of flavors.

1,391 cases made \$24 Score: 86

Dobbes Family Estate

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Quailhurst Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; bright, spicy raspberry cherry aromas; ripe, bright cherry and raspberry flavors, spicy notes, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy and bright Pinot with nice, elegant flavors and texture.

122 cases made \$65 Score: 87

Dobbes Family Estate

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Cuvee Noir 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, bit closed black cherry and berry aromas; deep and closed black cherry, berry and spice flavors; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big and ripe Pinot that needs air to open in the glass. Drink now or wait a few years.

277 cases made \$50 Score: 86

Dobbes Family Estate

Pinot Noir Oregon 2006

Medium ruby color; spicy blackberry and cinnamon aromas; spicy, ripe and rich blackberry flavors; silky texture, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. A bright and fruity Pinot that is perfect for your outdoor entertaining. Combines fruit from across Oregon—Willamette, Umpqua and Rogue valleys.

8,568 cases made \$18 Score: 87

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

El Molino Winery

El Molino Winery was founded in 1871 by W.W. Lyman, and operated until Prohibition would shut its doors for more than a half century. Following a successful career on Wall Street, Reginald Oliver purchased and refurbished the long-unused winery and re-launched the El Molino brand in 1981, with his first commercial Pinot Noir and Chardonnay coming in the mid-1980s. Production is roughly 2,000 cases with about half of that in Pinot Noir. Reg Oliver was a maverick in many ways, and remained under the radar producing great Pinot Noir from vineyards in Napa Valley—a region many think is too warm for Pinot. He was also a pioneer and a visionary, resisting the temptation of the marketplace to make big, overblown wines. He opted for power and depth through elegance and balance in all of his wines. El Molino's Pinot Noirs are consistently among the very best made in Napa Valley each year. They are silky and elegant, with spicy, berry and cherry notes and a great depth of flavor. They invariably pair well with food because of their balance and silky texture. Reg Oliver died of melanoma in 2005 at the age of 66. His daughter Lily Oliver carries on the work at El Molino and with her at the helm, we can be sure that his legacy will continue.

El Molino Winery *Pinot Noir Rutherford 2005*

Medium ruby color; ripe, stewed red cherry aromas with earthy notes; rich, ripe stewed red cherry, spice and earthy flavors; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot has great texture in the mouth and really opens up with some air.

818 cases made \$55 Score: 92

J Vineyards & Winery

J Vineyards & Winery was founded in 1986 by Judy Jordan as a methode champenoise winery to make one product: J sparkling

wine. While the J sparkling wine put the winery on the map and still remains more than 50 percent of the winery's production, J's new winemaker, veteran George Bursick has made his own mark with the J still wines including Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir bottlings include a regional Russian River bottling and vineyard designates from the Nonny's Vineyard, Robert Thomas Vineyard and Nicole's Vineyard.

J Vineyard & Winery *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Nicole's Vineyard 2005*

Medium-deep ruby color; ripe, stewed cherry and spice aromas; ripe, rich stewed cherry, spice and some earthy notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Nice structure and fruit character make this a wine that drinks well now but will also reward some cellar time.

1,800 cases made \$50 Score: 90

Kazmer & Blaise

Kazmer & Blaise is the partnership of vineyard owner Peter Molnar and winemaker Michael Terrien. The partners, whose middle names make up the winery name, produce a small amount of Pinot Noir from Peter's seven-acre Primo's Hill vineyard. Planted in the early 1970s, the Primo's Hill vineyard is mature with a lot of the depth and character due to the unique geology of the hillside blocks the partners were using. A deep layer of gravel runs under the vineyard and the vines yield a better core of fruit than surrounding, flat vineyards. The style is bigger than most Carneros Pinots, yet still balanced and full of flavors.

Kazmer & Blaise *Pinot Noir Carneros Primo's Hill 2005*

Deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry aromas with spice, pepper and toasty oak notes; deep, rich, pepper and spice flavors with dark cherry and toasty oak aromas; long finish. A big style of Pinot, but it's also big in flavor and depth. Great for a hearty steak.

230 cases made \$50 Score: 91

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Simply amazing Pinot..."

Kosta Browne *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2006*

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, intense, spicy, forest floor aromas; big, rich, deep juicy black cherry flavors with forest floor and spice notes; silky texture; sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Wow! This is simply amazing Pinot. The depth and lush layers of flavor just keep on coming out of the glass. Needs time, needs air.

3,627 cases made \$48 Score: 97

SMART BUY!

"Ripe and rich..."

King Estate Winery *Pinot Noir Oregon Signature Collection 2006*

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, rich aromas of black cherry and earth; rich and ripe black cherry flavors with spice and earthy notes; lingering finish. Ripe and rich Pinot with flavors bordering on jammy. Nice all-around Pinot.

30,500 cases made \$29 Score: 87

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

King Estate Winery

King Estate is located in the Southern end of the Willamette Valley, southwest of Eugene, Oregon near the town of Lorane. Founded in the early 1990s by Ed King III and his father, Ed King Jr., the 1,033-acre wine estate specializes in Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris but does produce a few other varieties as well. The 110,000 square foot winery's design is based on a French chateau and the estate vineyards are located at elevations ranging from 800 to 1,100 feet. The winery's Pinot offerings include the Signature Collection bottling—always a good value, some vineyard designated bottlings and the top of the line Domaine bottling.

King Estate Winery

Pinot Noir Oregon Signature Collection 2006

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 5.

Kosta Browne

Am I glad that Michael Browne never became an architect. That was originally his plan when he moved from Washington state down to Sonoma County in 1987. Fortunately for all of us who love great Pinot Noir, Michael found himself working in local Sonoma County restaurants to pay the bills. He got seriously interested in wines while working in these restaurants and he revised his career plan. Michael began his winemaking career working as an intern with Robert Rex at Deerfield Ranch Winery in the Sonoma Valley in 1997 and became co-winemaker there in 2000. At the same time, Michael's passion for Pinot Noir was growing and he soon teamed up with Dan Kosta, then wine director and head sommelier John Ash & Co. to launch Kosta Browne. There's no question that they've been on a roll ever since. Kosta Browne's Pinot bottlings include vineyard designates from Kanzler Vineyard in Sonoma Coast; Koplen Vineyard and Amber Ridge Vineyard in Russian River Valley as well as Gary's Vineyard and Rosella's Vineyard in Santa Lucia Highlands. Regional blends are made from Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley. These Pinots just get better and better with each vintage.

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir California 4-Barrel 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, closed aromas of spice, earth and cherry; rich, deep and intense cherry, spice and forest floor flavors; lush, sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Intense and deep, this Pinot, though a little closed in right now is still in your face with flavor.

101 cases made \$68 Score: 94

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dusty cherry, cola and earthy

aromas; rich, ripe, dusty red cherry flavors with spice, cola and sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, lush and delicious—terrific true-to-appellation Pinot.

3,567 cases made \$48 Score: 93

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Amber Ridge Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, earthy, some dusty cherry aromas; rich, ripe, deep, great juicy red cherry flavors with complex earthy, dusty notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex and very interesting, this Pinot has a great core of bright fruit and layers of earthy complexity.

724 cases made \$68 Score: 95

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Keefer Ranch 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; bright, cherry, raspberry aromas; rich, ripe, bright red cherry and raspberry flavors; juicy, some earthy and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This is a bright and juicy Pinot—just plain fun to drink, but great with grilled meats too.

556 cases made \$68 Score: 93

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Koplen Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep dark cherry and plum aromas with forest floor notes; deep, complex, dark cherry and plum flavors, forest floor and earthy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This is complex mouthful of Pinot! The layers of flavor just keep growing in the mouth as the wine opens up.

724 cases made \$68 Score: 96

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy, spicy aromas; rich, dark cherry and spice flavors; earthy, herbal notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and earthy Pinot that's great for the table.

365 cases made \$68 Score: 93

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy cherry and earthy aromas; rich, ripe, deep dark cherry flavors with complex earthy, meaty notes; silky texture, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Lush and silky, this is a great Pinot to

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

sit and drink—pair it with some grilled pork tenderloin and it's a wrap!

365 cases made \$68 Score: 95

Kosta Browne ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2006***

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 5.

Kosta Browne ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Kanzler Vineyard 2006***

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry, earthy, meaty aromas; rich, ripe, lush dark cherry flavor with earthy, smoky bacon notes; silky texture; sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Lush, rich and delicious, this Pinot cries out for a roasted chicken... or just a glass to pour it in!

724 cases made \$68 Score: 96

Kutch Wines

The story of Kutch Wines is not necessarily unique—I know several Pinot people with similar stories—but it does demonstrate the power of positive thinking and the power of the internet wine community. The story begins with Jamie Kutch, founder, owner and winemaker of Kutch Wines working as a trader on Wall Street during the day and spending a good portion of his leisure time immersed in wine through the erobertparker.com wine forums. He met a lot of people there and learned a lot about wine. Long story short, he tasted a Pinot from Kosta Browne and through a series of conversations with winemaker Michael Browne got himself a gig with Kosta Browne to learn how to make wine. He announced this on the wine forum and hundreds said that they wanted to buy his wine when it was ready. Kutch Wines was born. For the 2006 vintage, Jamie worked with four vineyards: McDougall Ranch in the "true" Sonoma Coast and the Kanzler and La Jons vineyards in Green Valley. Two Pinot bottlings were produced in 2006: a Russian River Valley blend and a vineyard designated Pinot from McDougall Ranch. For 2007, vineyard designates from McDougall Ranch and Kanzler Vineyard are planned along with a Sonoma Coast blend.

Kutch Wines ***Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2006***

Medium ruby color; deep spicy cola and cherry aromas; rich, ripe, spicy cherry and cola flavors, lively and bright, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe, bright and very tasty Pinot from Jamie Kutch—a delight to drink.

287 cases made \$39 Score: 93

Kutch Wines ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast McDougall Ranch 2006***

Medium-deep ruby color; deep herbs and cherry aromas; ripe,

rich zingy cherry flavors with nice earthy and herbal notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and tasty Pinot with some nice herbal and earthy notes.

90 cases made \$48 Score: 92

La Rochelle

Steven Mirassou is part of a family that has more than 100 years of history in California wine with its Mirassou Vineyards. Steven's new venture, La Rochelle, is focused on high-end Pinot Noir from California and Oregon. His Pinot bottlings range from a regional Santa Lucia Highlands bottling to "Classic Clones" from Arroyo Seco, Garys' Vineyard from Santa Lucia Highlands and Deer Park from Santa Cruz Mountains.

La Rochelle ***Pinot Noir Monterey County 2005***

Medium ruby color; stewed cherry aromas with some herbal notes; ripe stewed cherry and earthy flavors; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Nice, middle of the road Pinot that will work with a wide variety of dishes.

238 cases made \$24 Score: 85

La Rochelle ***Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands 2005***

Medium ruby color; savory spice and stewed cherry aromas; ripe stewed cherry and earthy flavors with savory spices and some sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and ripe Pinot with enough earthiness to pair well with grilled meats or pasta.

364 cases made \$38 Score: 87

La Rochelle ***Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2005***

Medium-deep ruby color; spicy stewed cherry and plum aromas; rich, ripe, bright stewed cherry flavors with spicy sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, spicy Pinot with a lot of nice flavor. Serve with a roasted chicken or by itself.

231 cases made \$52 Score: 91

La Rochelle ***Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Paraiso Vineyards 2005***

Medium-deep ruby color; dusty, earthy aromas; ripe cherry flavors with dusty earthy notes; a good dose of oak, some tannin; long finish. Very earthy style—needs a big earthy dish to pair with.

119 cases made \$40 Score: 90

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Sleepy Hollow Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; spicy, ripe cherry aromas; ripe, red cherry with savory spice notes, sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe spicy Pinot with a very concentrated middle palate.

146 cases made \$38 Score: 88

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Umpqua Valley Anindor Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy, stewed cherry aromas; deep, rich, stewed cherry, earthy and savory spice flavors; some oak and tannin; long finish. Ripe, deep and earthy Pinot.

166 cases made \$42 Score: 87

Papapietro-Perry Winery

Papapietro-Perry Winery is a wine venture between four friends—Ben and Yolanda Papapietro and Bruce and Renae Perry. For Ben Papapietro, wine was always there—on the dinner table, at all family gatherings and in his grandparents' cellar. In 1980, Ben started his own garage winery at his San Francisco home. He began helping in the fledgling winery of a fellow newspaper employee—Burt Williams, co-founder of Williams & Selyem. It wasn't long before Ben produced his first solo Pinot Noir, securing enough grapes to produce five gallons of wine. A few years later friend Bruce Perry joined Ben in his winemaking ventures. By 1990, Ben and Bruce found consistent vineyard sources for their homemade Pinot Noir and spent the next eight years perfecting their craft. Armed with encouragement from friends, Ben and Bruce went commercial with their wine in 1998, producing 75 cases of Pinot Noir. As they became more established, they built relationships with great vineyards in the Russian River and Sonoma Coast regions and continued to make terrific Pinot. Bruce's wife Renae Perry soon took on the sales and marketing for the growing brand. Ben's Pinots are definitely vineyard-driven and thus the styles vary with each vineyard and vintage, but there's always a core of deep fruit, silky texture, great structure and balance. Pinot bottlings include blends for Russian River and Sonoma Coast, vineyard designates from Peters Vineyard, Leras Family Vineyard, Mukaida Vineyard, Ellsbree Vineyard, and a Pommard Clones bottling that is a clonal selection from the Peters and Leras Family vineyards.

Papapietro-Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Ellsbree Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; complex dark cherry aromas with earthy notes; deep, rich, earthy black cherry fruit, with spice and cola notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, lush and deep Pinot that needs air to really open up.

675 cases made \$49 Score: 93

Papapietro-Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Mukaida Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; deep, lush cherry aromas with spicy notes; rich and lush red cherry flavors, spice, forest floor and sweet oak notes, good structure and balance; long finish. A truly complete Pinot—terrific structure and rich lush flavors.

195 cases made \$75 Score: 94

Papapietro-Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Peters Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; spicy cherry and earthy aromas; deep and rich, earthy cherry flavors with spicy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy and spicy Pinot that's a little tight now, but will reward a few years of age.

800 cases made \$49 Score: 92

Papapietro-Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Pommard Clones 2006

Medium ruby color; deep earthy, dusty red cherry aromas with some spice notes; rich, red cherry flavors with earthy, spicy notes; silky texture with sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. A delicious, rich Pinot perfect to drink now.

440 cases made \$70 Score: 94

Paul Mathew Vineyards

Mat Gustafson came to the Russian River Valley after several years in retail and restaurants in Michigan and Colorado, building his passion for wine all along. Gradually, he decided he wanted to make wine and started a vineyard development company and began working in Western Sonoma County. It was there he met Joe Dutton of Dutton Ranch. Joe began recommending Mat's company for small vineyard sites. Mat soon sold his share of the vineyard management company and went to work at the Dutton family's Sebastopol Vineyards/Dutton Estate Winery as assistant winemaker, working with consulting winemaker Merry Edwards. In 2002, Mat was named head winemaker. With Paul Mathew Vineyards, he takes advantage of his relationship with the Dutton family to source Pinot fruit from their west county vineyard sites. He is a low-impact, low intervention winemaker and his style of Pinot shows that respect for the fruit—his Pinots are complex, delicate and elegant with a deep core of fruit and great structure. Mat's wife Barb runs the business side of the winery.

Paul Mathew Vineyards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2006

Medium ruby color; ripe red cherry and spice aromas; rich, red cherry and spice flavors, bright, sweet oak, good structure and

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balance; long finish. Ripe and spicy, this is a very nice medium bodied Pinot with fruit drawn from two Western Sonoma County vineyards: the TnT Vineyard and the Ruxton Vineyard.

146 cases made \$32 Score: 91

Paul Mathew Vineyards ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2006***

Medium ruby color; delicate cherry, spice and herbal aromas; dusty red cherry, forest floor and orange rind flavors, silky, good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy and a bit herbal, this Pinot needs a little time in the bottle and glass.

437 cases made \$30 Score: 89

Roessler Cellars

After more than 35 years of experience creating and running restaurants throughout the western United States, Roger Roessler found himself being drawn more and more to the wine country as he was constantly crafting the wine lists for his restaurants. It did not take long before he decided he might want to try his hand at making wine. Through his friendship with the Sangiacomo family in Sonoma he was able to contract for some Pinot Noir grapes from the family's vineyards. The challenge of finding a winemaker was met through a serendipitous connection to Wells Guthrie, who had just started his own Copain label. The timing couldn't have been better. As the next few years unfolded, Roger has added new vineyards and grown from 225 cases of that original Sangiacomo Vineyard bottling, to more than 6,000 cases of at least 10 single vineyard Pinots and five appellation blends, as well as a Pinot Rose and some single vineyard Chardonnays. Roger Roessler is a busy man these days. Scott Shapley has joined the winery as winemaker and is steadily honing the wines. And while Roger is still immersed in the restaurant business, he's also well underway in building his winery in the southwestern end of the Sonoma Valley. He has already built a serious following for his beautiful, balance-driven Pinot Noirs and is poised to take his Roessler wines to even higher heights.

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Blue Jay 2006***

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy dusty red cherry aromas; complex notes; ripe, rich, deep and complex, dusty red cherry and earthy notes; sweet oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, yet bright, this Pinot is yet another in what's becoming a long line of crowd-pleasing Blue Jay bottlings.

989 cases made \$32 Score: 93

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Hein Family Vineyard 2006***

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex cherry and earthy

aromas; rich, ripe, lots of deep cherry and cola flavors, spicy, earthy notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe, complex and still a bit tight, this wine needs air to open up in the glass.

190 cases made \$46 Score: 92

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Savoy Vineyard 2006***

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, earthy red cherry aromas; ripe, deep, complex dusty red cherry, forest floor and spice flavors, silky texture, sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Complex, deep and with amazing texture, this Pinot is simple a delight to drink and a natural match for grilled meats.

323 cases made \$46 Score: 96

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Chalone Brosseau 2006***

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, earthy, feral aromas; deep, complex, earthy, stewed red cherry flavors with feral, smoky notes, good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy and complex, this Pinot really opens up with some complex, feral qualities with some air. Great with grilled meats.

214 cases made \$42 Score: 95

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Mendocino County Alder Springs Vineyard 2006***

Medium ruby color; spicy, complex dusty cherry aromas with some sweet oak; ripe, dusty cherry flavors with some herbal and earthy notes, sweet oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex Pinot with great potential—needs air, though is more approachable than past vintages of Alder Springs at this stage.

187 cases made \$45 Score: 92

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch 2006***

Medium ruby color; ripe red cherry and cola aromas; rich, spicy cola and red cherry flavors, silky texture, some tannin and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. A rich and ripe Pinot that really represents Russian River Valley well.

175 cases made \$38 Score: 92

Roessler Cellars ***Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Clos Pepe Vineyard 2006***

Deep ruby color; closed in, but aromas of spice, earth and black fruit are emerging with air; deep, dense and complex, with great plum, black cherry and earthy flavors; moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big,

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deep style of Pinot that's expected from this vineyard—this is a wine to lay down in your cellar and think about the dinner five years from now when you'll serve it.

91 cases made \$50 Score: 95

Roessler Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills La Encantada Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex plum and black cherry with some bacon and earthy notes; rich, ripe, complex flavors of plum, black cherry and bacon; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. A very complex Pinot that looks and feels bigger than it is—I actually think that with some air, this is an elegant Pinot.

300 cases made \$46 Score: 95

Roessler Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Sanford & Benedict Vineyard 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; bit tight and closed but lots of dark cherry underneath; rich, ripe, deep and closed in; dark cherry and plum flavors with earthy, smoky notes; great structure and balance; long finish. Big, rich and complex, this Pinot needs time in the glass to open up. Once that happens, it's great with big roasted meat dishes. Yum!

291 cases made \$48 Score: 95

Roessler Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Peregrine 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, smoky, meaty dark cherry aromas; ripe, deep, rich dark cherry and plum flavors, smoky, meaty notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and smoky Pinot with a lot of depth—I have a feeling we're just scratching the surface of what's inside this wine. Be patient.

845 cases made \$34 Score: 93

Roessler Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Griffin's Lair 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry and forest floor aromas; deep, ripe, but closed in, with dark cherry, forest floor and sweet oak; some tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. This is a Pinot that is pretty tight right now. It's deep and complex and needs patience in the cellar. An hour or two in the glass really starts to open this Pinot up.

273 cases made \$45 Score: 94

Roessler Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast La Brisa 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, concentrated, complex dark cherry and forest floor aromas; rich, ripe, complex and deep

dark cherry flavor with forest floor and sweet oak notes; some tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot with layers of flavor. Really encapsulates cool climate coastal Pinot.

968 cases made \$30 Score: 94

Roessler Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma County Red Label 2006

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 3.

Shea Wine Cellars

It's definitely a story that you've heard before—a guy gets into wine while pursuing a career on Wall Street. He's got disposable income, likes to try new wines. In the mid 1980s, Dick Shea was visiting his brother in Seattle and he heard about a 200-acre parcel for sale in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. After he does his due diligence on the property, he buys it, leaves Wall Street and becomes a winegrower. The Shea Vineyard was born and it doesn't take long for top winemakers to get in line for the grapes. The vineyard is located in the hills between the towns of Newberg and Yamhill and has 140 acres planted mostly to Pinot Noir at elevations ranging from 400 to 600 feet. The first plantings in the vineyard date from 1989. In 1996, Dick took his dream one step further and with his wife Deirdre began quietly making his own Pinot Noir and Chardonnay under the Shea Wine Cellars label. I, for one, am truly glad he did. His wines are among the most beautiful expressions of some of the best Pinot country in Oregon. They're big, full of complex fruit, with great structure and most importantly they are incredibly balanced. Dick and Deirdre took their dream to the next level with the completion of their understated and elegant winery at the base of the East Hill portion of the vineyard. Dick and Deirdre also have a new winemaker. Drew Voit came to Shea in April 2008 from Domaine Serene where he was associate winemaker. If you follow Shea Pinot Noir, you likely know that in past vintages, Dick Shea preferred to bottle using block designations. Two of his most popular block designates over the years were Block 23 and Block 32. He was forced to change that preference when he had to replant parts of his vineyard due to phylloxera. He began using clonal designations on his labels as a bridge until he could go back to block designations. He feels that he is almost there, so expect some changes to the Shea Wine Cellars Pinot lineup in the vintages to come (for example, for 2007, there won't be a Wadenswil clonal bottling). The current Shea Pinot bottlings include a Shea Vineyard estate, East Hill, Wadenswil Clone, Pommard Clone and Homer Cuvee. These are wines that really must be on your list and in your cellar.

Shea Wine Cellars

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard Estate 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; ripe, earthy, dusty cherry aromas;

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deep, rich, nice dusty cherry flavors; sweet oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, lush and interesting Pinot that just seems perfect for roasted meats.

2,500 cases made \$45 Score: 93

Shea Wine Cellars

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard East Hill 2006

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 3.

Shea Wine Cellars

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard Homer 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, tight, dark cherry, earth and toasty oak aromas; ripe, rich, deep dark cherry, spice, earthy flavors with toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, deep and very complex Pinot that's still really a baby—definitely tight right now but a good hour plus in the glass brings out some very nice potential.

252 cases made \$75 Score: 94

Shea Wine Cellars

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard Pommard Clone 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy, dark cherry, anise aromas; rich, ripe, deep, juicy black cherry fruit with nice spice and earthy notes; silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and delicious, this bottling always seems to show itself as a perennial favorite of mine.

245 cases made \$52 Score: 95

Shea Wine Cellars

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Shea Vineyard Wadenswil Clone 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, herbs, spice and earthy aromas; ripe, rich, deep dark cherry with herbs and cocoa notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, spicy style that needs time, but can work now with a big, hearty dish. Give it plenty of time to open.

236 cases made \$52 Score: 92

TreViti

TreViti, "three vines" in Italian, was founded in 2002 when Don and Charlene Stolo purchased a parcel of land with an existing vineyard a couple of miles inland from the coastal town of Cambria in Central California. The property's nine-acre vineyard was planted to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Don and Charlene decided that rather than continue to sell the grapes to other wineries, they would rather make their own wines. TreViti was born. The winery is named for the Stolo's "three vines"—their children Justin, Maria and Breanna. They named the estate vineyard Stolo Family

Vineyard. Steven Dooley of Stephen Ross Wines in Edna Valley is the winemaker and he's producing Chardonnay and Syrah from the estate vineyard. His Pinot bottlings include one from the estate vineyard and a vineyard designate from Bien Nacido Vineyard.

TreViti

Pinot Noir Central Coast 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; spicy, herbs and stewed cherry aromas; ripe, rich, spicy stewed cherry flavors with some herbs and sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, balanced style of Pinot with layers of flavors—quite nice to drink by itself.

98 cases made \$30 Score: 90

TreViti

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard 2005

Deep ruby color; deep, closed, cocoa and spice aromas; ripe, closed, bit tight, deep cherry cocoa flavors; moderate oak and tannin; long finish. Deep style that's a bit closed right now. Make sure to give it plenty of air in the glass and be patient in the cellar.

146 cases made \$30 Score: 87

Truchard Vineyards

Truchard Vineyards in the Carneros region was founded as a vineyard in the mid-1970s and as a winery in 1989, but the winegrowing tradition in the Truchard family dates back to 1887. Founder Tony Truchard, a medical doctor by training, developed his first vineyard back in 1974. Tony and his wife Jo Ann Truchard quickly developed a reputation as farming one of the outstanding vineyards in Carneros. Truchard Vineyards now produces 16,000 cases of wine, including Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, Rousanne, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Zinfandel and Tempranillo. The Truchard Pinots are big, deep and yet very expressive of the vineyard; more complex than most Carneros Pinots.

Truchard Vineyards

Pinot Noir Carneros 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; intense stewed dark cherry aromas; deep, rich stewed black cherry flavors with dusty, herbal notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Big and deep Pinot with great structure—needs air to open up and worth the wait.

2,305 cases made \$28 Score: 91

Willowbrook Cellars

Willowbrook Cellars was founded in 2001 by winemaker Joe Otos and retired technology executives John Tracy and Ed Sillari. The focus has been producing Russian River Pinot Noir

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and Chardonnay, always looking for new and interesting vineyard sources in Russian River Valley. More recently, the partners have begun looking outside the area for new vineyard including Marin County and Napa Valley.

Willowbrook Cellars

Pinot Noir Marin County 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; complex spice, forest floor and plum aromas; rich, ripe cherry and plum flavors with earthy forest floor notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, complex and spicy, this is an interesting Pinot from an underappreciated Pinot area. This wine will improve with a little cellar restraint.

245 cases made \$38 Score: 90

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines reviewed in this issue.

Alfaro Family Vineyards

831.728.5172, www.alfarowine.com

Departure Wine Company

949.689.6472, www.departurewines.com

Dobbes Family Estate

503.538.1141, www.dobbesfamilyestate.com

El Molino Winery

707.963.3632, www.elmolinowinery.com

J Vineyards & Winery

888.594.6326, www.jwine.com

Kazmer & Blaise

707.255.4929, www.kazmerblaise.com

King Estate Winery

541.942.9874, www.kingestate.com

Kosta Browne

707.823.7430, www.kostabrowne.com

Kutch Wines

917.270.8180, www.kutchwines.com

La Rochelle

925.243.6442, www.lrwine.com

Papapietro Perry Winery

707.433.0422, www.papapietro-perry.com

Paul Mathew Vineyards

707.865.2505, www.paulmathewvineyards.com

Roessler Cellars

707-933-4440, www.roesslercellars.com

Shea Wine Cellars

503.241.6527, www.sheawinecellars.com

TreViti

866.212.7168, www.treviti.com

Truchard Vineyards

707.253.7153, www.truchardvineyards.com

Willowbrook Cellars

707.823.0149, www.willowbrookcellars.com

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Wine Samples

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

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

All samples should be sent to the following address:

PinotReport

Attn: Gregory S. Walter

625 Ross Court, Sonoma, CA 95476

Tel: 707.935.0326

About Our Tastings

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

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

How We Taste

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

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

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

Wine Prices and Sourcing

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

Our Wine Ratings

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

PinotReport's 100-Point Scale

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

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