

PinotFile[©]

Daniel Lee— Lord of the Pinots

Daniel Morgan Lee is a true California star. Born in Turlock, California, he learned the wine business at UC Davis where he found out quickly he could drink wine and make a career out of it. After a stint as winemaker at Jekel Vineyards and Durney Vineyard (both in Monterey County), he started Morgan Winery with his wife, Donna, in 1982. Over the years, Lee made excellent Pinots and now has begun to receive top accolades for his Burgundian style gems. “Winemaker of the Year,” exclaimed noted wine writer Dan Berger in April, 2001, and “Winemaker of the Year,” proclaimed the *San Francisco Chronicle* in December, 2003.

After 15 years of sourcing Pinot Noir from other vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands, he now has his own vineyard— the 65-acre Double L Vineyard— as in Double Luck, named after his two twin daughters. This vineyard is organic with no spraying, compost teas used to add nutrients and microbes to the soil, and cover crops grown between rows to attract good bugs. Now he can stop purchasing grapes from vineyards that were marginal and concentrate on his own vineyard and grapes from only the best growers in the area.



Last year Lee changed his lineup of wines, eliminating the “reserve” designation and creating single-vineyard Pinot Noirs. These new releases have been well-received, with praise from *California Grapevine*, *Wine Enthusiast*, *Pinot Report*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Since the winery has no tasting room, purchases must be made by appointment at the winery (831-751-7777), through the website (morganwinery.com) or at retail outlets. The lineup:

- 2001 Morgan Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** \$22
- 2000 Morgan Double L Vineyard Pinot Noir** \$42
- 2000 Morgan Gary's Vineyard Pinot Noir** \$38
- 2000 Morgan Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir** \$38

**Pinot Noir:
Live For the
Curves.**

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“Our property (Double L Vineyard) had been used for row crops and was no longer alive. I needed to get it back to life. Healthy soil means healthy plants, so I decided to build up the soil organically rather than use chemicals. The vineyard is making great wine and they'd have to kill me to get me to change.” - Dan Lee

Inside this issue:

Clone 828	2
Burgundy Camp	2
PinopFile Picks	2
Americans in New Zealand	3
Hospices de Beaune	3
Prince's Top Pinot Producers	4

Clone 828

Currently in France, the Pinot Noir clones that are favored are numbers 667, 777, and 828, along with 114 and 115. Classified as a “Qualitative” clone, most of the information on Pinot Noir 828 is anecdotal because so little of it is planted outside of France. Recently, a winemaker in New Zealand illegally smuggled in some vines that were the 828 clone of Pinot Noir. Archery Summit Winery in Oregon has the largest planting of 828 in the United States and the winery seems pleased with its performance.



Daniel Lee planted some 828 clone of Pinot Noir in the Double L Vineyard this year— a first for the Santa Lucia Highlands. This new clone planting along with the organic practices used in farming this vineyard, will likely lead to better Pinot Noirs.

Burgundy Fantasy Camp

The Bouilland Symposium is a semiannual weeklong fantasy camp for Burgundy enthusiasts who want to experience the special wines of Bourgogne and rub shoulders with the star winemakers of the region. The camp costs a hefty \$7,600 or so, but then nothing comes cheap when great Burgundy is on the table. The fee is all-inclusive, including lodging, food, wine, and tuition. Many participants return after the experience so that the 10 spots per session are snapped up 6-12 months in advance.

Lodging is in a 15th-century farmhouse in Bouilland, France, which is the home off wine trader Becky Wasserman. She migrated to this village 35 years ago, and now with her husband, Russell Hone and friend Clive Coates, developed this wine camp. The tone is anti-Parker and pro Allen Meadows.

Attendees find themselves sitting around a table drinking Burgundy with superstars like the Seysses family of Domaine Dujac, Laurent Ponsot of Domaine Ponsot, Anne Gros of Domaine Gros and Christophe Roumier of Domaine Roumier.

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PinotFile Pinot Picks of the Week

2001 Scherrer Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$30 A combination of grapes from the well-known Hirsch Vineyard and the Fort Ross Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast. Soft and seamless, ripe, jammy, sweet and sexy. Smooth as a newborn baby’s rear end. Da, Da. 707-823-8980

2001 Merry Edwards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$32 This Pinot Noir is made from grapes sourced from Olivet Lane, Meredith Estate, and Klopp Ranch. Sweet and dense on the palate, redolent of spice, cola and raspberry couilis, finishing with a tail of black fruits and exotica. About as forward as you can get in polite society. 707-838-9951



Americans Invade New Zealand

In recent years there has been a steady exchange of winemakers between New Zealand and the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Since harvest days are six months off in each hemisphere, it is a reasonable exchange that has rapidly boosted the quality of New Zealand wines.

In addition, many Americans have been purchasing land, vineyards, and wineries over the past few years. Americans Julian Robertson, a New York investor, and Napa winemaker Reg Oliver (El Molino Winery) now own three prominent wine properties in New Zealand: Stonyridge Vineyard, one of New Zealand's top cult wineries, Te Awa Farm, a 23,000 case facility, and Dry River Wines, another prestigious boutique property.

Gary Andrus, formerly of Pine Ridge Winery in Napa Valley and Archery Summit in Oregon, purchased vineyard land adjacent to the well-known Felton Road Winery. New Zealand-born Lyndsay Harrison, who is the founder of Harrison Vineyards in Napa Valley, and her husband, have acquired property in Central Otago and are planting mainly Pinot Noir.

Two Oregon vineyard owners have also bought land and planted vineyards in New Zealand. Donald and Carole McCrone own the McCrone Vineyard in Yamhill which is managed by Ken Wright Cellars. They built a home and planted nine adjacent acres to Pinot Noir in Martinborough. The fruit is managed by the Ata Rangi Winery in Martinborough.

Kim Crawford Wines was purchased this year by the Canadian wine company Vincor (which owns RH Phillips in California and Hogue in Washington), Crawford makes most of its wine from purchased grapes.

Pinot Noir plantings have gone from 2,065 acres in 1999 to 6,855 today. Significant amounts of new Pinot Gris plantings have also appeared. 80 percent of the vineyard land in Central Otago is planted to Pinot Noir.

The best of New Zealand Pinot Noirs such as the Felton Road Central Otago Block 3 Pinot Noir can create interest in Burgundy lovers, but the high price (\$53), like many top New Zealand Pinot Noirs command, makes their popularity and price/value ratio lag Pinot Noirs produced in Burgundy and in this country.



“New Zealand is still a young wine producing nation. But it has emerged as a world player.” - Wine Business Monthly

Hospices de Beaune

The Hospices de Beaune is located in Beaune, the center of Burgundy wine trade, and housed in one of the most recognizable buildings in the world of wine. Hospices de Beaune was founded in 1443 as a charitable hospital to give healthcare to the citizens of Burgundy. The foundation that runs the hospital has received over 45 Burgundian vineyards from donors and has its own winery. Each year, on the third Sunday of November, the wines of Hospices de Beaune's vineyards are auctioned to support the foundation. During the three-day event, up to 1000 barrels of wine are auctioned. This last November 16, the auction of the 2002 vintage raised over \$4 million to support the hospital. The prices paid are a barometer of the vintage's quality and potential value. Average price per barrel was up over 20 percent from 2002.



David Andrew, the Global Wine Director for Costco, the largest wine retailer in the United States, has left Costco to pursue other opportunities.

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir


Princeofpinot.com



What's In YOUR Cellar?

What Pinot Noirs am I buying and cellaring? Over the past year I consider the following American Pinot Noir producers to be clear-cut favorites. Some are relatively new on the scene, but most are solid performers year in and year out. There are other single Pinot Noir releases that were notable, but these producers have a strong portfolio of several Pinot Noirs that were consistently wowzas across the board. You cannot go wrong with any of the Pinot Noirs from these sources— treat yourself or greet your guests in style. By the way, that picture above of me, alas, is not in my wine cellar (I am lovingly leaning on a barrel of Shea Wine Cellars Pinot Noir at Adelsheim Winery in Oregon).

California

Bonaccorsi (Santa Barbara)
Brewer-Clifton (Santa Barbara)
Littorai (St Helena, Napa)
Merry Edwards Wines (Windsor, Sonoma)
Rochioli (Russian River Valley, Sonoma)
Scherrer Winery (Sebastopol, Sonoma)
WesMar (Russian River Valley, Sonoma)

Oregon

Domaine Drouhin
Hamacher
Penner-Ash
Rex Hill
Shea Wine Cellars