

Unrated Bottle of Pinot Consumed

John Maggiano of Santa Ana, California found himself running late for a wine tasting dinner. Realizing that he would not have time to stop by his 4,000 bottle home wine cellar and access the scores of every wine in the cellar documented from all the leading wine journals on his cellar computer, made a hurried stop at the Wine Club near his residence. According to a witness at the store, John was unable to get the attention of Greg Koslovsky, the store's resident expert on Burgundy. What happened then in the store is uncertain. Apparently, John reached for a bottle of Burgundy for which the store had not posted a "shelf talker" with a high score for the wine as reported in a major wine publication. Still shaken by the ordeal several days later, John said, "I don't know what came over me." "I thought I remembered something about the wine and the producer, but I was in a hurry and did not know the score on the wine." When John entered the door of the wine tasting dinner, he was in the dark about whether the wine had received a score above 90 or not. He actually tried to discourage the host from pouring the wine, exclaiming "Parker says this wine is still closed and needs a few years to open up." The host, however, was undeterred, decanted the wine, and put it into the tasting. Even though the wine perfectly complemented the food and showed very well, John was beside himself with grief about the group consuming an unrated wine. John apologized profusely to the group and promised never to do this again. Fortunately no one in the group was harmed. (April Fools!)

Restaurant Pinot Noir is Hot

California and Oregon Pinot Noir has become more popular for the third year in a row as a customer choice on restaurant wine lists. Clive Coates has recently said that Oregon Pinot Noir can only achieve premier cru status, but as John List of Craft's Restaurant says, "Hey, I like drinking premier cru Burgundy."

On the wine list at the Fifth Floor Restaurant in San Francisco, one-half of the selections are Pinot Noir, mainly Burgundy. Other restaurants, such as Gary Danko in San Francisco and Atelier in New York are selling more Pinot Noir than ever, and 20-33% of their lists are devoted to Pinot Noir. Sommeliers have embraced Pinot Noir for its forward fruit and versatility.

Volume 3, Issue 31

March 29, 2004

Pinot Noir's share of red wine consumption has doubled in the last ten years to nearly ten percent. Restaurants still sell more cabernet and merlot, but Pinots are gaining favor and are often the first wines on the list to be sold out.

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Domaine Denis Mortet

Denis Mortet, 47, produces wines from seventeen different appellations from the 28 acres he farms. His wines can be heavily-extracted “Ultracalifornian” style Pinots, but when he goes for more refined wines, he can work magic. His immaculate vineyards reflect his attempts to take every measure possible to produce the finest, ripest fruit possible. His goal is to produce a wine which is drinkable young or old. Many of his vineyards post vines over 25-years-old. He cultivates his village wines just as if they were a Grand Cru— thus all of his red wines see 100% new oak (Francois Freres). His specialty is six different *crus* from his communal Gevrey-Chambertin vineyards. My favorites are the les Champeaux and Clos St Jacques.

2001 Domaine Denis Mortet Bourgogne Cuvee de Noble Souche (\$20) This wine is made from several parcels near Dijon, and one in Gevrey-Chambertin, including some 80-year-old vines. This is an astonishing wine for its pedigree. Tons of rich red and black fruit and several more flavors that defy description. Great length and complexity. There is no American Pinot that can approach the aromas, flavors, and textures of this wine for the price.



Winemaker Extraordinaire Ted Lemon

Born in New York, Ted attended Brown University to major in French literature. In his junior year he spent six months at the University of Dijon. It was during this stay that he discovered the charms of wine. Some of his French friends, including Jacques Seysses of Domaine Dujac, asked him to stay on after the semester ended, but he declined and returned to Brown to finish his senior year. He was then awarded a Samuel T. Arnold Fellowship offered by IBM to study winemaking in Burgundy. In 1980, Ted returned to the University of Dijon, and apprenticed at Domaine Dujac and other wine domaines. Later he returned to California to work with Josh Jensen at Calera Winery. Meanwhile, in Meursault, Guy Roulot died, leaving an estate of nearly 35 acres and a prominent name for his wines. Roulot’s son had no interest in taking over the Domaine, and in 1982, Jacques Seysses called Ted at Calera and asked him to come to Meursault and take over the reigns for Guy Roulot. In 1983, Ted arrived at Domaine Roulot and became the first American ever to be a winemaker in Burgundy. Although this was a break with tradition, Ted spoke fluent French and this was helpful. He worked hard to fit into the tradition of Burgundy, made very good wines and became accepted. After two years, he returned to California, but was asked why he had chosen Burgundy. He said that, like the French, he believed the soil was of major importance in a wine’s character.

Ted feels that the future of West Coast Pinot Noir lies in learning to work with the soils to produce the full, ripe, and profound flavors at lower brix levels, brix levels which will naturally give us wonderful wines in the 13-14% alcohol range. Mother nature does this occasionally on her own. Too often in California, Ted says, winemakers pick fruit at absurdly high brix levels, claiming that this is the genius of California terroir, and seeking high flavor impact. But fruit picked at perfect balance will always be the most crystalline reflection of the terroir in which it is born. To achieve wines of classic balance, we must improve our soils’ long-term moisture retaining ability. Biodynamics offers the clearest path to this goal. Regardless of whether one practices biodynamics, the goal will be achieved primarily through increasing our soils’ humus content. Furthermore, balancing organic matter levels, appropriate long term management of cover cropping, precise yield control, discriminate hedging and leafing, and judicious irrigation management will all play significant roles. While any producer will be able to give lip service to such ideas, implementing them will be far more complex.

Ted Lemon is the owner and winemaker of Littorai and consults for other wineries.

Radio-Coteau

Radio-Coteau is a colloquial expression suggesting “word of mouth.” (from the northern Rhone region translated as broadcasting from the hillside). Owner and winegrower Eric Sussman first heard this expression from a friend while living and working in Burgundy. It refers to a commitment to community, to growers found by word of mouth, tradition handed down in the cellar, and friends helping at harvest.



Born in New York State, Eric developed an interest in wine while studying agriculture at Cornell University. He ventured to Washington’s Yakima Valley where he spent several years managing the vines and cellar of a small artisan producer. He then moved on to France, spending the 1995 vintage in Bordeaux and the 1996 vintage in Burgundy at Domaine Armand of Pommard and Domaine Jacques Prieur of Meursault. He returned to northern California and spent time acquiring valuable experience at Bonny Doon and Dehlinger. He crossed paths with Bill and Joan Smith, owners of La Jota, who became partners in Radio-Coteau Wine Cellars.

Radio-Coteau focuses on Pinot Noir grown in western Sonoma county, within the neighborhoods of Occidental, Bodega, Sebastopol, and Cazadero. Also, a highly regarded Pinot Noir vineyard northwest of Philo in Mendocino County’s Anderson Valley rounds out the portfolio.

Current releases:

- 2002 “La Neblina” Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** A blend of select vineyards. 240 cases. \$30.
- 2002 Marsh Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 1.3 acre vineyard planted to Swan clone. 76 cases. \$35
- 2002 Hellenthal Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** From a rugged hillside vineyard. 320 cases. \$35
- 2002 Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 420 cases. \$40

Purchase wines online at www.radio-coteau.com, or phone 707-887-8335

Rescuing “Corked” Wine

Mike Havelka, president of Vinterus Technologies L.L.C., has developed a filtration product called appropriately, Wine Rescue, that literally “rescues” wine that has been affected by cork taint. Wine Rescue is the first product to treat the issue of cork taint which affects between 2 and 5 percent of bottled wines. The Wine Rescue bottle top pump removes TCA particles, yet does not affect the taste and color components that give wine its character. The internal pump injects air into the bottle, pushing wine up a dip tube, and through an activated carbon filter disk. Using technology called Thin Layer Adsorption, the activated carbon disk captures various compounds, such as TCA, by getting them to adhere to its surface, while permitting the wine to be filtered. A leak-proof seal allows the filtered wine to be poured into a decanter. This is an extremely sensitive technology; removing five parts per trillion of TCA in a bottle of wine is analogous to removing a tear from an Olympic-size swimming pool!

Wine Rescue will be available on the market in June from online retailers and kitchen product stores and also at the web site at www.winerescue.com. A Wine Rescue unit will cost \$200 with replacement filters available for \$5 each.

King Estate Winery in Oregon has released a DVD titled "2001 Harvest". This is a fun video showing grape picking at harvest, machines crushing grapes, and wine storing and drinking information. Dick Erath talks about the early days of the Oregon wine industry.



Princeofpinot.com

Some interesting figures: There are more acres of Pinot Noir in Champagne (28,787) and in Germany (26,279) than in Burgundy (26,054). In the United States, Pinot Noir is grown in 13 states, with the largest plantings in California (23,879) and Oregon (7,366). Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Virginia are among those states with Pinot Noir vineyards. Italy has more plantings (8,190) than any area of California except Sonoma (10,108). Australia has more Pinot Noir acreage (10,907) than New Zealand (6,484). Total worldwide acreage of Pinot Noir is 206,448. (figures compiled by Chicago Wine School 2004)

Lucia Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

Lucia means *light*, but like many wines from the Santa Lucia Highlands, it is anything but light. The Pinot Noirs from this AVA tend to show huge extraction, firm tannin structure, intense deep blueberry and wild blackberry flavors, and dark purple-blue to pitch black color. These wines are not for the faint of heart and send shivers down the spine of fitness loving Francophiles. Gevrey-Chambertin on steroids.

The Pisoni family (Ed and Gary, and Gary's sons, Jeff and Mark) own and farm Pisoni Vineyard and Gary's Vineyard (in partnership with Gary Francioni). Francioni also owns Rosella's Vineyard nearby. These are among the most sought-after contractual vineyards in California. Producers who access grapes from these vineyards include Arcadian, Capieux, Loring, Miner, Morgan, Ojai, Peter Michael, Patz & Hall, Siduri, and Testerosa.

Lucia is the sister label to Pisoni Vineyards & Winery. The vineyards are planted at 1,3000 feet above sea level in shallow soil that stresses the vines to produce intense fruit. Gary Pisoni first planted five acres here in 1982. Gary had recognized that this area of the Santa Lucia Highlands -known as *Eternidad Paraiso* or *eternal paradise*- was the perfect place for Pinot Noir. He subsequently planted 40 more acres in the Pisoni Vineyard. The 50-acre Gary's Vineyard lies eight miles north in a somewhat cooler area. The Santa Lucia Highlands is noted for long, hot summer days tempered by fog from the Monterey Bay, sending nighttime temperatures into the 40s and allowing the grapes to ripen fully.

Latest Lucia releases include: **2002 Lucia Pinot Noir**, \$45, 88 cases, **2002 Lucia Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**, \$34, and **2002 Lucia Gary's Vineyard Pinot Noir**, \$37. 800-946-3130. Wine Exchange in Orange had a large allocation last year.