

# PinotFile<sup>©</sup>

The FIRST Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

## Prince Unnerved by Turn of Events

It happened so fast I am still shaken by the ordeal. The whole evening remains a blur to me. I bought a bottle of New Zealand Pinot Noir the other day— it was highly lauded by a local wine merchant and favorably reviewed in *Decanter*. I have never really had a Kiwi Pinot Noir that was ethereal— usually the vegetative notes are unappealing and the high fruit extraction lacks complexity. But I keep sampling to see what's what.

I went to open the bottle with my corkscrew and horrors, the bottle had a metal screw cap that went unnoticed by me when I made the purchase. I twisted open the bottle and poured a glass. Somehow pouring a Pinot Noir from a screw top bottle seemed sleazy. I suddenly realized that I had lost my *PinotNoirginity*. I felt violated, embarrassed and taken advantage of. I could sense that Randall Grahm was laughing at me.

The wine, 2002 Akarua Central Otago Pinot Noir (Bannockburn Heights Ltd Winery), priced at \$32 was no value. It wasn't bad, plenty of rich ripe fruit, but a little hot and tannic with some funkosite on the back end. More ultracalifornian than burgundian.

I apologized to myself for my lack of thoughtfulness, and promised I would never do anything like that again. If you are ever tempted to open a Pinot Noir with a screw top closure, resist, resist, resist. I certainly learned my lesson.

## Just When You Thought Screwtops Would Be The Demise Of "Corked" Wines

A Bordeaux enologist, Dr. Pascal Chatonnet, has found that TCA (2,4,6-trichloranisole) is not the only cause for "corked" wines. Another related compound, TBA (2,4,6-tribromoanisole) can produce the same moldy wet-cardboard effect on wines. Unlike TCA, TBA is not confined to natural corks. It is airborne and ubiquitous in the winery, affecting wine in barrels and artificial closures like plastic corks that are stored in the winery facility.



## If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir

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"Growers in Burgundy can rest easy. It will be a while yet before their New Zealand counterparts develop the tools to rival its inherent elegance and charm. Although they can never pretend to be Burgundy, they may rival other New World Pinots."

Guy Woodward, *Decanter*, July 2004

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## How Can It Be The “Food Network” With No Wine?

My son is a college student who loves to cook. He watches the Food Network by the hours and I have often sat in to see what the excitement is about. I must admit I really enjoy “Iron Chef” for its campy presentation and drama. Food Network entertains an average of 550,000 households during prime-time each day with a surprisingly large 18- to 40-year old viewing group.

What struck me as baffling was the fact that almost no Food Network show features wine or even shows a bottle of wine on the table. Oh sure, Emeril Lagasse gives some lip service to wine occasionally, but there is no discussion of wine as an essential food at the table. We know that something special can be created by matching food with wine that far surpasses either of them on their own. An opportunity to educate a huge young population about the virtues of wine is being wasted.

Fortunately, public television cooking programs have taken a different approach, with wine served and discussed with practically every meal. Public television stations broadcast more than 71 cooking shows across the country and some shows draw twice the audience as Food Network’s most popular programs. Could it be the wine?



## Landmark “Kastania” Pinot Noir

This winery was founded by Damaris Deere (think John Deere tractors) with the original goal of producing premium Chardonnays (a goal that has been readily achieved). A few years ago Landmark started a Pinot Noir program and they have been equally successful in this venture. The Kastania Vineyard is a 10 year old, five-acre hillside property in the cooler part of the Sonoma Coast appellation north of Fort Ross. As I have discussed in a recent issue, this coastal region provides the ideal marine influence for growing Pinot Noir. Since the first vintage in 1999, this Pinot Noir has been consistently delivering a luscious drinking experience.



**2001 Landmark Kastania Vineyard Pinot Noir** (originally retail \$46 but available for \$29 at Roots Cellar in Healdsburg, CA). 725 cases. Sweet and ripe with purple flowers and a spicy, black cherry scent, very drinkable, but complex. Hooly boppa cow bobba cow bobba cow cow.

Landmark also produces a Grand Detour Pinot Noir from the Van der Kamp Vineyard located in the Sonoma Coast. Grand Detour is a small town on the Rock River south of Moline, Illinois where John Deere, the great,

## What’s In YOUR Wine Cellar?

A fellow MD and Pinot Noir enthusiast in Singapore writes about his “cellar”. He houses the heart of his collection in a old wine fridge with space for about 150 bottles. His time frame for drinking New World Pinot Noir is 3-5 years although he has had some lovely bottles of Kalin Pinot Noir from back in the 80’s. Current Pinot Noirs include Anne Gros Clos Vougeot, Claude Dugat Gevrey Chambertain, Dehlinger Octagon/Goldridge, Seresin single vineyard Pinot Noirs, and Valli Estate, Felton Road and Kuwarau Pinot Noirs from Otago, NZ. He also cellars current bottlings of Vincent Girardin 2002 White Burgundies, and Chardonnays from Aubert Winery, both Ritchie Vineyard and Quarry Vineyard from 2002. A lot of good s\_\_\_ in a small box.

## Wine and Health Musings

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology believe that the key to a long, healthy life may lie in a single protein— Sirt1— that gene that controls whether our body stores fat or sheds it. The protein is activated by resveratrol, which has been linked in previous studies with extended lifespan in yeast and tiny worms. If a drug could be produced that would bind to Sirt1 and fool the body into thinking that it needed to release fat, people could obtain the life-extending benefits of calorie restriction without the side-effects.

Resveratrol, according to research recently from the University of Illinois at Chicago, kills *Chlamydia pneumoniae*, a bacteria associated with pneumonia and bronchitis. Additional related studies have shown that resveratrol can kill other bacteria present in food, reducing the risk of bacterial-induced gastrointestinal disorders.

A California company called Resveratrol Partners has produced the first dietary supplement to contain the natural antioxidants found in red wine. The pill, called Longevinex, provides 15 milligrams of trans-resveratrol from French red wine and Giant Knotweed. The stabilized red wine extract is sealed in a patented airtight capsule. To get an equal dose of the antioxidant resveratrol, one would have to drink up to five glasses of red wine. The Company's research shows that Longevinex has the most biological activity (by activation of Sirtuin 1 Gene) than any other similar product on the market. Cost is about \$1.00/capsule.

New research has shown that males can safely consume three alcoholic drinks a day before their livers begin to show signs of damage, but the threshold for women is about two drinks a day. In addition, these studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo reported that the way in which alcohol was consumed may be more important than the amount in women. Women who drank on an empty stomach, which increases the absorption of alcohol, had more gamma-glutamyltransferase or CGT ( an enzyme released by damaged liver cells) in their blood than woman who drank with meals. But among men, food made no difference in enzyme levels. The author of the study, Dr. Saverio Stranges, who is from Italy, suggested that Americans might want to pay attention to the Mediterranean style of drinking. "In Europe, we tend to drink with food, and don't go out just to have a drink." Women, he said, might want to be sure to eat something when they have a drink.

Sometimes you drink too much wine. Some people seem to tolerate it better than others. Jean Trimbach of the famous Alsatian wine family told the story of his father, who, at the age of 80, had been put on a strict diet by his doctor. He was limited to one bottle a day (100 gallons a year) and thought he would die of thirst. You forget that a 15% monster California red has significantly more alcohol than a light French white wine at 11.5%. That 30% more alcohol translates to more intoxication. When overdrinking does strike, you can reach for one of the many products on the market with dubious effect (Hangover Helper, The Cactus Cure, Hangover-B-Gone) or turn to the website, [hungovergourmet.com](http://hungovergourmet.com) for other hangover remedies.

## Calera Has “Cult Status” in Japan

Calera Wine Company's Pinot Noirs have become very popular on this Asian island. Apparently a current Japanese adult comic book or 'manga' features a crime-fighting sommelier. In one episode, the hero is given a couple of wines to taste and has concluded that it must be Domaine de la Romanee-Conti wine, only to recall at the last second that it could also be Calera's Jensen Vineyard Pinot Noir since it is the only other wine of similar character and quality in the world. With this promo, Calera now sells thousands of cases of wine annually in Japan!





  
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## Michigan Pinot Noir

The Michigan wine industry is booming. Since 1997, there has been a 24 percent increase in vineyard areas in the state to about 13,500 acres, making Michigan the fourth largest grape-growing state. Of these, 1,500 acres are dedicating to winemaking grapes. There are now 40 wineries licensed to operate in the state, up from 17 in 1995. Michigan makes many styles of wine— sweet to dry, still and sparkling, and non-grape fruit wines. Not usually thought of as a serious wine producing state, Michigan's Rieslings, and most recently, Pinot Gris wines have been quite good and won major awards in wine competitions.

90% of Michigan wine grape vineyards are in the southwest corner where there have been commercial vineyards since 1867. Vineyards here are close to Lake Michigan where cooling winds off the lake prevent early budding of the vines in the spring and subsequent frost damage. The growing season is extended into the Fall with the help of warm breezes from the lake ("the Lake Effect").

The Pinot Noirs produced here have been variable with some capturing Pinot Noir's fruity style and others showing more acid and complexity.

Three of the major Pinot Noir producers include Chateau Chantal, a 65 acre estate winery; Leelanau Cellars, specializing in Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot; and Arcturos from Black Star Farms, whose winemaker Lee Lutes was crowned "Michigan's Best Red Winemaker" by *Decanter* magazine in 2004 and whose dream is to make "the perfect Pinot Noir",

The Pinot Noirs are inexpensive, mostly around \$14 a bottle. No out-of-state shipping is allowed so you won't be drinking any of these wines unless you are traveling to Michigan. Certainly Michigan is no threat to California or Oregon, but the diversity of Pinot Noir from various terroirs like Michigan is intriguing.

**The PinotFile is a working man's (woman's) newsletter. Only wines the author has drunk are featured, and then only ones that pass muster. No weak Pinot Noirs are included since why bother? If its not in the PinotFile, it may not be worthy.**

**The wine reviews are based on drinking individual wines over a few hours with and without food. The evolution of the wine is traced in the glass. The general impressions of the author are given, but no scores. Scores don't mean "diddy squat". I believe the numerical grading system is faulted by gradations that are way too precise and subjective. Basically I tend toward the balanced, elegant, and complex style of Pinot Noir regardless of origin.**

