

PinotFile[©]

The FIRST Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

Aptos, Salamanders, & Pinot

Salamandre Wine Cellars is a small family winery established in 1985 by pediatrician Wells Shoemaker, MD., and partner Dave South. The winery is located in a redwood canyon two miles inland from the beaches at Aptos in Santa Cruz County. Wells has a great sense of humor and named his winery after the Santa Cruz Long Tod Salamander which have taken refuge in his winery. As he puts it, "Perhaps he's not as regal as the eagles, flighty as the falcons, nor horny as the stags adorning the Napa labels, but the Salamander is a noble predator— a vital rampart of the Santa Cruz mountain order." Actually, French King Francois Premier proudly wore the Salamandre on his coat of arms, and now that he is gone, his descendants have honored his love of wine by appointing the Salamandre to guard the entries of the noblest of the Cognac wineries.

Salamandre Wine Cellars makes small quantities of wine from select vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains and Arroyo Seco. The Santa Cruz Mountains is primarily a Type I Climate ideal for Pinot Noir, but there are actually more acres of Cabernet planted than Pinot Noir. The pioneer winery in this AVA is Mt Eden Vineyards, originally planted by Martin Ray with cuttings from Paul Masson via Burgundy, and made famous by outstanding Pinot Noirs made there by Merry Edwards in the 1974, 1975, and 1976 vintages. The Santa Cruz Mountains, however, is an area susceptible to Pierce's Disease and the steep terrain makes it difficult to farm. For these reasons, winemaker Wells Shoemaker has sourced Pinot Noir grapes from the Arroyo Seco AVA.

Arroyo (stream) Seco (dry) is one of Monterey County's 8 AVAs located between Soledad and King City and straddling Hwy 101. This large AVA is a neighbor of the much better known Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. The Arroyo Seco designation is rarely used on wine labels, and instead, Monterey County is the preferred description. Early pioneers here were Mirassou and Wentz in the early 60's and later Ventana and Jekel. Chardonnay and other white varieties have been most successfully grown here, but the early morning fog, warm days, and afternoon ocean wind are conducive to Pinot Noir cultivation. Also, the mountain springs run down through the Arroyo Seco gorge into the Salinas Valley and leave plenty of water deep in the ground for grapevines.

Salamandre's early Pinot Noirs were sourced from Ciardella Vineyard planted in the 70's and 80's. The clones, however, are better suited to

**If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

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"I tend to judge doctor winemakers by the color of their hands in October. The passionate ones are purple. My patients adapted to a certain organic duskiness of my palms at harvest, albeit with a few raised eyebrows among the urban raised."

Miles Shoemaker MD

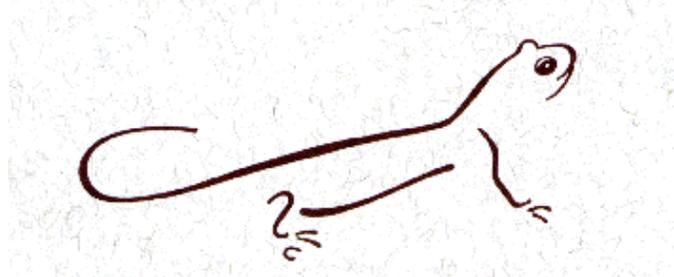
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to making sparkling wine. A small experimental vineyard (Arroyo Seco Vineyard) was planted in the late 90's with Dijon clones on American rootstock, and since the inaugural vintage in 2000, has been the source for Salamandre Pinot Noir. Wells Shoemaker remarks, "I believed we had finally stumbled onto the perfect match of soil, climate, and clones of this finicky grape. After the long, steady summer of 2002, the cymbals clashed and the drums began to beat. The wine has an aftertaste that lingers and changes with the grace of a mountain sunset. Hedonistic indulgence!"

2002 Salamandre Wine Cellars Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir (\$30, \$324 by case). The winery is not open for tasting but periodic open houses are held when the fancy strikes. The wine is available at www.salamandrewine.com. This wine won both a Double Gold (every judge voted gold) and Best of Show at the 2004 Santa Cruz Mountains Wine Competition. Like slurping cherry vanilla custard.

SALAMANDRE WINE CELLARS



Latest Pinot Noir Releases

2002 Etude Carneros Pinot Noir (\$40). This is Etude's first Carneros Pinot Noir to include fruit from the new Estate Pinot Noir vineyard. The vineyard stretches along the northern border of the Carneros appellation. The cool climate here, combined with well-drained, rocky soils derived from volcanic material, make it ideal for growing Pinot Noir. This wine is "a big, juicy, varietally correct Pinot Noir with rich, dark, fruit intensity." Etude Wines 707-257-5300.

2002 Siduri Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$50). The ninth vintage for Siduri from this well-known Sonoma Coast vineyard. The grapes were actually picked four different times and each of the pickings were fermented separately in bins. 50% new oak barrels, no racking, fining, or filtration. Ranks up there with the 1995, 1999, and 2000 vintages of this wine. Great vineyard, great vintage, great winemaker pretty much seals the deal. Siduri Wines 707-578-3882.

2002 Whitcraft Winery Santa Barbara County Lot 2 Pinot Noir (\$30). This wine was an experiment— left in oak for additional aging to soften the wine. A lot of strawberries and cherries. 28 cases. **2002 Whitcraft Winery Bien Nacido 'N' Block Young Vines Pinot Noir** (\$50). 4 year old vines, all clone 115. 18 cases. Whitcraft Winery (Santa Barbara) 805-965-0956, www.whitcraftwinery.com.

2003 Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$10). The 2002 was the best Pinot Noir for the money I tasted last year. The sources are the older vine blocks of Sebastiani Estate Vineyard in Carneros and the Dutton Ranch in the Russian River Valley. Not "true" Sonoma Coast, but labeled as such since these vineyards are in the large Sonoma Coast AVA. www.sebastianivineyards.com. Widely available at retail.

Others include: **2002 Cakebread Carneros Pinot Noir**, **2002 Chehalem Ridgecrest Pinot Noir** and **Stoller Pinot Noir**, **2001 Domaine Drouhin Laurene Pinot Noir**, **2002 Gainey Vineyards Santa Rita Hills Limited Selection Pinot Noir**, **2002 King Estate Domaine Pinot Noir** (their top-of-the-line bottling well reviewed in the past by *QRW*), **2002 Pisoni Estate Pinot Noir**, **2002 Siduri Willamette Valley Pinot Noir**, and **2002 ZD Wines Rosa Lee Pinot Noir**.

RRVW Association AVA Revision

The Annual Russian River Valley Winegrower's Association "Grape to Glass Weekend" is next week and I encourage you to attend. The Russian River Valley has over 200 growers and 10,000 acres planted to wine grapes and is the heartland of California Pinot Noir. Merry Edwards (known affectionately in the wine trade as the "Queen of Pinot") is the President of the RRVW Assoc and also Chairman of the Appellation Revision Committee.

The RRVW submitted a petition to the Tax & Trade Bureau in 2003 to change the boundaries of the existing Russian River Valley AVA. The most significant change in the revision would be the inclusion of multiple vineyards planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the 90's in an area known as the Sebastopol Hills (south of the current southern border). These vineyards, including Merry Edward's Meredith Estate Vineyard, lie within the fog influence that defines the AVA, but were excluded when the AVA was originally formulated in 1983.

The petition also includes a request for subappellational designations which reflect distinct geographically unique regions within the AVA:

Laguna Ridge (also known as Vine Hill): warmer temperatures here. Area includes J Swan, Sonoma-Cutrer, Kistler, Dehlinger, Lynmar, and Olivet Lane and Klopp Ranch Vineyards.

Los Molinos (also known as Santa Rosa Plain): a plain with a high water table bisected by Guerneville Road. Area includes Martinelli, DeLoach, La Crema, Merry Edwards. The AVA revision will also add parts of Los Molinos which were bisected by the original AVA.

Middle Reach: south of Healdsburg. Area includes Bynum, Williams Selyem, Rochioli.

Sebastopol Hills

If the petition is approved, the subappellational designation may appear on labels and provide additional information about the exact location of the winery and/or vineyard within the AVA.

The Material Girl Saves Pinot Noir Vineyard

Madonna has given her father \$900,000 to save his failing wine business. But rather than accept charity, father Tony Ciccone made her the major shareholder in Ciccone Vineyard. Madonna's husband, film director Guy Ritchie, turns out is a pinotophile, and could not get along without his favorite wines— Ciccone Vineyard Dolcetto and Pinot Noir. Apparently Tony Ciccone has been sending them bottles of his wine from Italy for Christmas for years. Madonna has not always been close to her father, but in recent years has mended fences. When her husband told her "he couldn't bear to be without it", she was easily convinced to put some serious cash into the business.

Pinot Noir, by the way, is known as Pinot Nero in Italy. It is grown extensively in northeastern Italy. Most of it is simple and mediocre, even vinified as white wine, but most often used in Italian sparkling wine (metodo champenois) where it has been very successful. Pinot Nero has begun to appear in Tuscany as one of the designer show wines under the name vini da Tavola. These are serious wines usually aged in French oak barrels. Quantities are small and rarely exported at present.



The reference book and Bible for all Pinotphiles is now published: *North American Pinot Noir* by John Winthrop Haeger (University of California Press, \$38).

This is a prodigious effort at documenting the history of Pinot Noir in California and Oregon. More information than you probably will ever want to know about clones is included, but the history of clonal development is key to understanding the successful emergence of quality Pinot Noir in North America. The author profiles 72 major producers of Pinot Noir (some notable exceptions apparently refused to join in such as Kistler, Dehlinger, Martinelli, and Marcassin) with very well documented chronologies of each winery's vintages, including extensive tasting notes. The maps included are easily worth the price of this book. I have longed for years for regional maps showing exactly where notable vineyards are located and these maps deliver. The work is by no means comprehensive as many small boutique Pinot Noir producers are omitted or mentioned in passing (ie Goldeneye, Lynmar, Wes-Mar, Brogan, Hitching Post, etc), but including the over 300 small Pinot Noir producers in itself could easily occupy another volume.

My Magic Marker was smoking as I read this one and I easily devoured the 400+ pages in two days. Required reading for the pinoiriste



PrinceofPinot.com

Kazimierz Wine Bar Scottsdale

I was in Scottsdale recently and when the temperature is 112 degrees my tongue thirsts for a brewski or one of the hand-shaken margaritas at the Old Town Tortilla Factory. But if you are a wine devotee and nothing but wine will do, head for Kazimierz Wine Bar, 7137 E. Stetson Drive (480-946-3004). Wine bars have become very fashionable in the Valley of the Sun and from the looks of all of the luxury cars in restaurant parking lots, there is plenty of money to support them.

Kazimierz is owned by Peter Kasperski who operates the Cowboy Ciao and See Saw restaurants close by. This place is a modern speakeasy with an unmarked door in the alley inviting in only those who are in-the-know. Locals call it the "Kazbar" and it is very unique with plush sofas and chairs in a European wine cave atmosphere. The music is eclectic and savory small plates are served from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM to accompany the staggering 2,000 bottle wine list. Wines are offered by the glass and in flights, as well as bt the bottle. The list features Pinot Noir vintages dating back to 1997 and beyond for numerous wineries (Kalin DD Cuvee available from 1991). A Pinot Noir candy store.

The wine list is saturated with Oregon and California Pinot with a smattering of Pinots from other places (Te Kairanga, New Zealand, Gilliard Dole des Monts, Switzerland, Bass Phillip, Hazy Blur, and Geoff Weaver, Australia, and Domaine Leroy and Dominique Laurent, Burgundy). The list of goodies goes on and on: Argyle 1999 Spirithouse (\$138), Patricia Green 2001 Shea Vnyd Block 7 (\$87), Torii Mor 1998 White Rose Vnyd (\$127), Bergstrom 2000 Cumberland Reserve (\$59), Sinean 2000 Reed & Reynolds Vnyd (\$118), Loring 2001 Clos Pepe Vnyd (\$72), and multiple vintages of Siduri, Patz & Hall, Tandem, Flowers, Arcadian, Talley, Littorai, Brogan, Hartford Court, Anderson Conn Valley, Fiddlehead, DuMol, Ojai, El Molino, Ken Wright, Lynmar, and Paul Hobbs. The wine bar is open Tues-Sat and available for private tastings and wine dinners.