

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot Noir

Alive for 05

New Year predictions for Pinot Noir and related wine issues:

- ?? Consumers vintners will become more prevalent (a number of facilities have appeared on the scene that take consumers step by step through the process so they can proudly produce a few cases of their own wine)
- ?? World-class Pinot Noirs will emerge from the Mornington Peninsula of southern Australia and Central Otago region of New Zealand.
- ?? Rose Champagne and Roses from Pinot Noir (often labeled vin gris) will become more popular because of their affinity for food and suitability for summer drinking.
- ?? Now under French control, bankrupt DeLoach (Russian River Valley) will become a premium Pinot Noir producer once again.
- ?? More Burgundy presence in California and Oregon will be evident.
- ?? Quality/price ratios will be emphasized and or replace 100 point scores.
- ?? Shipping laws will be liberalized creating a boom for California and Oregon wineries.
- ?? Little or no restaurant corkage will become more prevalent.
- ?? More wine-themed movies will appear— there are a lot of stories out there to be told.
- ?? Alcohol control for California Pinot Noir thru spinning cone technology will increase in use.
- ?? There will be more talk about global warming and its effect on cool-climate viticulture regions producing Pinot Noir.
- ?? Consumer vacations with sommeliers, winemakers, wine tasters, and grape growers will become more popular.
- ?? At \$800 for French oak barrels, Pinot Noir winemakers may look to using less new oak or employing other new oak products.
- ?? Someone will devise a rating scale for wine writers.

**Cheers, salud,
alla salute,
skal, chin chin**

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Over the past year I am proud to say readership has increased every month. The Calif-centric PinotFile is truly global with crew-members in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, and Asia (I haven't heard from the French yet). I am sure that the PinotFile has turned more people onto fine Pinot Noir than few other sources.

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Major Wine Story of 2004: Aussies In, French Out

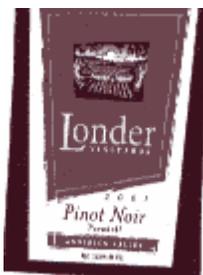
While the French are seeing their share of wine imports to the United States shrink, the Australians are exporting wine to Americans at an ever increasing rate. The number one imported wine to the United States is Yellow Tail Chardonnay and Shiraz (Casella Wines) with a staggering 7 million cases shipped to our shores. The popularity of Aussie wines is not difficult to understand. The wines have a good price/quality ratio and names that Americans can identify with— who doesn't like reaching for a bottle of Laughing Magpie, Ball-Buster, or Woop Woop Shiraz? The French (along with Gallo) are countering with, ugh, Red Bicyclette.

Everyone raves about wines from Alsace but they are white and who really drinks them regularly? Rhone wines receive great scores and have had a string of great years, but when did someone serve you a Rhone wine at dinner? How many of your friends know that Hermitage is Syrah and Chateauf de Pape is primarily Grenache, much less know how to spell Chateauf? Everyone talks about a Riesling revolution, but who can read Austrian and German wine labels, and again, who gets excited about white wine? Forget Italian wines, you need a college degree in Italian to understand their labels which do not list the varietal name or much else of value. Chile and Argentina are exporting some great wines, but they have an image of "cheap" to overcome..

The Burgundians have many export issues to deal with. Their wines are for elitists, too expensive, too hard to find, have to age several years for the best ones to reach their peak, and require a course in French to understand the region and the outdated labels. Really Burgundy is becoming a rich man's game. It is bought and sold at auction by the superrich who pay too much for it to really drink it. Will the Burgundians ever find a little room on the labels to print the words "Pinot Noir"? To most Americans, Bourgogne might as well be the name of a newly-discovered planet.

No, the Aussies are the only country to follow the American lead in nomenclature and packaging and therefore will continue to sell well here. They will have more difficulty getting into the Pinot Noir market because great Pinot Noir cannot be made cheaply anywhere and they have some catching-up to do. However, its fair dinkum to say that great Aussie Pinot Noir will become more available on these shores in the near future.

New Pinot Noir Producers Worth Tracking



The past few years have seen an explosion of boutique Pinot Noir producers in California and Oregon. Many of these wines are only available by mailing list. The following list is by no means comprehensive but features some of the most promising.

California: Ambullneo, Aubert, Aubin Cellars, Belle Glos, Cobb Coastlands, Cuneo, Demuth Vineyards, Domaine Alfred, Failla, Fire Engine, Hirsch Estate, Hope & Grace, Kosta Browne, La Vie Vineyards, Londer, Lost Canyon, Ortman Family, Peay Vineyards, Pey-Marin, Radio-Coteau Wine Cellars, Roessler Wine Cellars, Sea Smoke, Tandem, TAZ, and Woodcnhead.

Oregon: Belle Vallee, Dusky Goose, J Christopher, Lachini, Scott Paul, Soter Beacon Hill, and White Rose.



TEN
APPELLATION SANTA RITA HILLS
Santa Barbara County California
100% 14.1% ALC/VOL



Corkscrew Wine Emporium for Pinot Noir

Michael Alberty of the **Corkscrew Wine Emporium—Urbana** (217-337-7704) stocks and sells many of the best California and Oregon “garage” Pinot Noirs available. Sure University of Illinois has a crappy football team, but Michael’s online Pinot Noir offerings (urbana@thecorkscrew.com to join the mailing list) are carefully selected and well-priced (mention the PinotFile for discounts). All of the wines are well-described with informative descriptions of the winemakers in the monthly online communications. Michael knows Pinot.

Recent wines offered included Pinot Noirs from Adelsheim, Chehalem, Domaine Drouhin, J. Christopher, Bergstrom, Soter Beacon Hill, Daedalus, Jezebal, and Owen Roe in Oregon; Vision Cellars and Loring Wine Company in California; and others from France and New Zealand.

Wines can be shipped from Illinois to California and other free-trade states.



SayWhat?

There are a number of wine terms used very loosely in discussions about wine. These terms are often poorly understood and thrown about without a true understanding of their meaning. There is no sense in discouraging the “poetic license” of wine dreamers since wine is a beverage that lends itself to flowery descriptions. But there are a number of words whose use in context demands accuracy. Thanks to an eNewsletter published by French Wine Explorers (February, 2004), certain terms can be precisely defined.

Balance: Balance refers to the relative levels of acidity, alcohol, tannins and roundness in the wine that is felt in the mouth. A well-balanced wine has all of those elements in equal amounts and no element dominates. Harmonious is a good descriptive. Balance is a sign of quality in a wine and balance is something a wine has at the start— an unbalanced wine will never become a balanced wine no matter how long you age it.

Complexity: This term really refers only to aromas. Some of the aromas in wine we look for are grouped into families such as fruits, flowers, forest floor, spices, and more. When you find several different fruit aromas in a wine, that is not a complex wine. A wine is complex when it has several families of aromas present. The more families you find, the more complex the wine. Complexity, like balance, is a sign of quality in a wine.

Attack: This term is frequently abused. The attack is the first sensation you experience as the wine enters your mouth. A sweet wine will have a sweet attack, an acidic wine will have a lively attack, etc.

Finish: This is another vague term that is improperly used. There are two kinds of finish: aromatic and gustative. The aromatic finish refers to the persistence of the wine (that is, how long the aromas last on the palate once you swallow or spit out the wine, measured in seconds). The gustative finish refers to which of the tastes (acid, tannin, alcohol, or roundness) leaves the most lasting impression on your palate. For example, a Pinot Noir might have a long persistence with a final impression of freshness (refreshing acidity).

Aftertaste: When tasting a wine, you have the attack, then the finish, and then the aftertaste, if any. The aftertaste and the finish are not the same thing, although frequently used interchangeably. Aftertaste usually refers to a bitter taste, and comes last because the bitterness taste receptors are located at the very back of the tongue. Other aftertastes are a metallic taste, or a taste of sulfur. Aftertaste is always a defect in a wine.

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir



There are three new Pinot Noir clones for 2005 which will be showing up in winery propaganda soon. ENTAV/INRA 165, 743, and 943 are all high quality clonal selections with 943 attracting the most interest so far.

UC Davis now offers cuttings of 58 certified clones of Pinot Noir with several more in the pipeline. These clones will behave in predictable ways after planted and not infect surrounding vines. Whether the clone will produce good wine will depend on the producer matching up the particular vineyard site with a compatible clone. Vineyard site and management of the site are more critical than clonal selection, but you need all three in harmony to make an ethereal Pinot Noir.

QPR Wines Online Buying Guide

Neil Monnens is an advertising executive who started **WineRelease.com** several years ago to provide a listing of monthly wine releases and links to winery's websites for ordering. Last year, Monnens realized that in many blind tastings conducted with friends, the less expensive wines were often preferred over the expensive "big name" labels. He knew that he would rather pay \$20 for a highly-rated and thoroughly enjoyable wine than \$60 for a similarly-rated and comparable wine, even though the expensive wine might carry a more prestigious label. After all, quality and price are not always consistent. He developed **QPR Wines** (Quality/Price Ratio Wines), an online buying guide that ranks wines by value by utilizing the retail prices and wine critics' scores.

His rating system for Pinot Noir works this way: He takes the average retail price of the Pinot Noirs in each vintage that received the same average score from top wine critics, divides that by the average retail price for all Pinot Noirs of that vintage that received the same score and then assigns a percentage rating for each wine. A rating of 100% means the wine's price matches the average price for all similar wines from that vintage with that score. Any rating below 100% is a better value (the farther below 100, the better the value) and any rating above 100% is a poor value (the higher above 100, the worse the value).

Among 2001/2002 West Coast Pinot Noir, the best values wines were: 2002 Sebastiani Vineyards, Sonoma Coast (\$10, 90 points, 28%), 2001 Rex Hill Vineyard, Willamette Valley (\$10, 87 points, 31%), and 2001 Eche-lon, Central Coast (\$12, 88 points, 36%).

Two sets of varietals are rated in each issue, 18 issues per year. Subscriptions cost \$35 annually. Worth every penny unless maybe you only drink Pinot Noir like me. The premier issue is available free for review on the website QPRwines.com.