

**The Perfect
Pinot Noir
Hasn't Been
Made Yet**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinot NOir

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Here's To Your Health

At a time when numerous research studies have demonstrated a clear health benefit from moderate wine drinking, the French have launched an anti-alcohol advertising campaign. The French government's assertion that moderate wine drinking promotes cancer has invoked the ire of France's wine industry and a group of right-bank Bordeaux producers have threatened legal action to stop the campaign. Ironically, the French ministry for health, recently awarded the controversial scientist, Professor Serge Renaud, the Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur on July 14, 2005, the French national day. Professor Renaud was the man behind the 'French paradox' whereby the French consumed large quantities of saturated fat-based foods and yet suffered less heart disease than most other western countries. Renaud later explained the paradox by noting that antioxidants and alcohol apparently protect the heart from thrombosis and thereby counteract the effect of a diet high in fat. His theories have since been supported by substantial medical research. Some of the most recent studies are summarized below.

Swedish researches have found that women who drink wine daily have stronger hearts. A study, reported in *Heart*, of 102 women cardiac patients under age 75, found that those who drank moderate amounts of alcohol daily had healthier heart beat rhythms than those who drank little or no alcohol.

The *British Medical Journal* found that elderly Europeans who followed the Mediterranean diet lived a year or so longer than those who did not. The Mediterranean diet consists of moderate wine consumption, and recommends nuts, fruits, mono-unsaturated fat (ie olive oil), fish, poultry, whole grain breads and brown rice. The same researchers of this study had previously demonstrated that Greeks who followed a Mediterranean diet had a lower risk of heart disease and cancer than those who followed a Western diet.

Professor David Sinclair, an Australian researcher, has shown that resveratrol extends the lifespan of every organism given it including yeast, fruit flies, and worms. He is currently researching the effect on mice. He is hopeful that his research will lead to the development of new drugs to treat diseases associated with aging such as heart disease and Alzheimer's disease.

A study reported in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that men who drank at least seven drinks a week had a significantly lower risk of chronic kidney disease. Men who had two to four drinks a week had a similar risk as the nondrinkers.

"If every adult in North America drank two glasses of wine each day, cardiovascular disease, which accounts for almost 50% of deaths in this population, would be cut by 40% and \$40 billion dollars could be saved annually."

... ..David Goldberg,
M.D., University of
Toronto

The *Journal of Nutrition* reported this year that eating fresh grapes may prevent the accumulation of harmful cholesterol (LDL) in the bloodstream and reduce the incidence of atherosclerosis. This benefit is thought to be due to antioxidants in grapes known as polyphenols. The study used an edible grape powder that contained all of the biologically active compounds found in fresh grapes.

A recent Harvard Medical School study of 109,690 women aged 25-42 who drank a glass or two of wine a day for 10 years reduced their risk of Type 2 (adult-onset) diabetes mellitus by 40 percent compared to those women who drank no wine. Other studies on men have shown similar results. It is thought that the antioxidant components of wine protect against the inflammation that may contribute to the development of Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

In the *Journal of American College of Surgeons*, a Yale School of Medicine researcher reviewed the latest studies associating red wine with cardiovascular health and showed conclusively that drinking two to three glasses of red wine daily supports heart health. Studies have shown some benefit from spirits and beer, but there is an overwhelming benefit from consuming red wine. Polyphenols, which are also found in berries, green tea and chocolate, prevent the buildup of plaque on the linings of arteries and inhibit platelet formation which can lead to blood clotting. Future research will be directed at finding the specific polyphenol extracts with the described properties.

Researchers in Japan and Iceland have found that moderate wine consumption reduces the development of cataracts by 50 percent.

A Spanish study reported in *Thorax* linked moderate red wine use to a slight but statistically significant reduction in the development of lung cancer.

Research reported in the *International Journal of Cancer* found that men who drink one to two glasses of red wine per day reduce their risk of prostate cancer by almost half. White wine helped a little, but beer and spirits did not. Boron, which is abundant in wine, is thought to suppress prostate cancer.

A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* this year reported that consuming less than one drink per day can reduce the risk of cognitive impairment in the elderly by 20 percent. It is thought that alcohol has a beneficial effect on the blood vessels of the brain.

Australian researchers estimate that a “polymeal” of wine, fish, dark chocolate, fruit, vegetables, almonds and garlic, eaten every day (or at least four times a week in the case of fish) would increase men’s life expectancy by an average of 6+ years and women’s by an average of 5 years. The same diet could reduce heart disease risk by 76 percent.

On the negative side of the numerous health benefits of moderate wine consumption is the issue of migraine headaches and ‘red wine headache syndrome.’ Red wine contains a polyphenol that releases a chemical in the brain (5-Hydroxytryptamine or 5-HT) that is thought to trigger migraine. Another causative factor is tyramine, a histamine relative that is found in red grapes, especially tannic varieties. Also, tannins in grapes and oak barrels can change serotonin levels in the blood. Grape varieties with thinner-skins and lighter tannins, such as Gamay, Grenache and Pinot Noir may be less risky for the migraine sufferer. Also older wines may contain sediment that has settled out the inciting compounds and may be better tolerated. Drinking a glass of water with every glass of wine and taking aspirin before drinking may significantly reduce the risk of headaches. I will never forget the day that I was celebrating my 10th wedding anniversary with my wife, Patty, at a shiek restaurant in Newport Beach, The Ritz. After sampling a Chardonnay we ordered as a precursor to the main wine (Pinot of course), my wife had her first migraine headache and we left the restaurant before eating our entrée. She loved wine but only cautiously dabbled after that until menopause when her migraines disappeared and she resumed her love affair with Kistler Chardonnay.

Rusty is Inexorably Linked to Pinot Noir

My parents nicknamed me Rusty at an early age partly because of my red hair and partly because every other kid in the neighborhood was named Bill. In reading some wine history recently I found another “Rusty” with a common interest in Pinot Noir: Martin Ray. A legendary winemaker, Martin Ray planted Pinot Noir in the Santa Cruz Mountains at the top of Mount Eden in the 1940s. His plantings were the precursors of the Mount Eden clone of Pinot Noir. According to John W. Haeger, writing in *North American Pinot Noir*, Ray sold Paul Masson’s La Cresta Vineyard to the Seagram’s Company in 1944, but took cuttings from the vineyard to start another vineyard nearby. Ray made Pinot Noir from these cuttings through out the 1950s and 1960s. He was to eventually lose most of his property over disagreements with his investors and the vineyard became Mount Eden Vineyards.

Martin Ray was a onetime stockbroker and real estate agent who was known for his eccentricities. His nickname was “Rusty.” He was said to be irascible, something I have been accused of (unfairly) at times. He was known to put Pinot Noir in Champagne bottles. Several years ago I obtained a few old bottles of Martin Ray Pinot Noir bottled in Champagne bottles and conventional bottles. They had been sitting in a Santa Cruz warehouse for years. There were no vintage dates on the bottles. Unfortunately, none of the wines were drinkable. I still have one pristine unopened bottle as a treasured keepsake.

The Queen of Pinot

Meredith “Merry” Edwards is also linked to Martin Ray, but more directly. She started her winemaking career fresh out of UC Davis at Mount Eden in 1974 and made some legendary Pinot Noirs there. In 1977 she moved on to help found Matanzas Creek Winery and has also made wine at Liparita, Whitehall Lane, Merry Vintners, Olivet Lane and others. Her focus, however, has also been on Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and has earned her the title of “Queen of Pinot.” Since establishing her own winery in 1997, she has had a string of outstanding Pinot Noirs noted for their core of lavish but focused Pinot fruit. She has many devotees who gobble up every available bottle on restaurant wine lists. She has also become a spokesperson for Pinot Noir and some of her “Merryisms” are quoted here :

“I know I’ve got a good Pinot Noir when what you smell comes true in the mouth”

“Pinot Noir is like a child that wants to catch every cold that’s out there. You have to pay close attention to sanitation - cleanliness isn’t next to godliness, it is godliness in a winery.”

“If I start salivating when I’m tasting, I know I’m close to my goal with Pinot Noir.”

“We work with a variety deficient in phenolics and tannins. I’m going to do what I have to do to maintain them.”

“I have learned that the hand of a fine winemaker serves the spirit of the vineyard. The winemaker protects and enhances the grapes’ unique vineyard-based qualities. Thirty years ago in California we had no word to describe this concept. Now we do - *terroir*.”

The current 2003 Merry Edwards Pinot Noirs represent her 30th harvest as a winemaker. Although she believes her best wine is almost certainly yet to be made, the current releases are cause enough for all pinotphiles to begin to salivate. Her style emphasizes dark fruits, earthiness, oak, and notable tannins.


PrinceofPinot.com

The Prince relishes your comments, your wine epiphanies, your celestial Pinot experiences and your recommendations.

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Some follow up on the “Does Alcohol Matter” article in the *PinotFile* recently. An Australian company, Memstar, has transportable equipment that can perform a transformation on wine called “evaporative perstraction.” Although the name is gastronomically unappealing, the technology can fine tune the wine’s alcohol level to align it with the wine’s so-called “sweet spot” of alcohol percent.

In my article in the *PinotFile* I erroneously reported that 8 oz of wine with 15.8% alcohol supplies twice the alcohol of 8 oz of wine with 12.5% alcohol. This should have read: 8oz of wine with 15.8% alcohol supplies 25% more alcohol than 8 oz of wine with 12.5% alcohol. That 25% is still a significant difference in volume of alcohol between the two wines of 3.3% difference in alcohol percentage by volume.

2003 Merry Edwards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$34). A blend from six of the finest local vineyards, including her own Meredith Estate and Klopp Ranch. Whole-cluster-whole berry fermentation in small tanks and punch downs by hand. The grapes are cold-soaked and the *lies* stirred.

2003 Merry Edwards Meredith Estate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$48). 2003 provided a very low yield from this vineyard. Three clones (Swan, Mount Eden, and Dijon 667) are vinified separately. Very dense and smooth, this wine will age beautifully.

2003 Merry Edwards Klopp Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$48) This vineyard is located on the Laguna Ridge and farmed with grower Ted Klopp. Small-berried grape clusters and big fruit flavors.

2003 Merry Edwards Merry’s 30 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$90). A singular wine from grapes grown in some of the Russian River Valley’s oldest Pinot Noir vineyards: Windsor Gardens, Olivet Lane and Quail Hill Ranch. The foundation of this wine was the best block of grapes harvested from the last vintage at Windsor Gardens (the vineyard is being torn out to build residential housing). To this she added several barrels of Olivet Lane *Essence*. A one-time production, her 30 honors these venerable vineyards with a commemorative silk-screened label designed by a local artist. A wine with tremendous aging potential.

Merry Edwards Pinot Noirs are available by mailing list and on the website, www.merryedwards.com or phoning the winery in Windsor, 1-888-388-9050.

