

**Readers
Uncorked**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinoaficionados

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Pinot Noir Excalibur

“The Stuff From Which Legends Grow”

In the current pursuit of single vineyard Pinot Noirs, a contrarian view is in order. I have attended hundreds of comparative tastings over 35 years. While many were wonderful for both the wines and conversations, sheer boredom eventually overcame me. I began searching for an experiment I could run with the wines rather than listening to the pontificator plonk. I placed an empty glass at the end of the flight and splashed a bit of each wine in the glass. I then compared this glass with the rest of those in the tasting. It proved to be the worst tasting wine in the lineup. I remained quiet about my experiment, although I felt satisfied that I had occupied my mind in a more interesting way than listening to the alleged valuable conversation.

In subsequent tastings, I repeated my experiment. This so-called table blend of white, red, rose and other wines nearly always came in last. Until I tried it with Pinot Noir. Astoundingly, the table blend of Pinot Noir triumphed as the best of the flight. Repeating this over time astonished me with the same results. Okay, once it came in second. I asked others to try this only to be met with a bevy of frowns by non-winemaking tasters. Yet, with some encouragement, a few elbows bent my way and many of those who sampled, eventually agreed. The main characteristic of these table blends of Pinot Noir was the increase in complexity.

These experiments took place in my early years as a home-winemaker. During my twenty years of making garbaggette-can wine, I have done well with occasional entries in county and state fairs (five consecutive gold medals from 1998-2002 for my Devil's Gulch, Nicasio, Marin County, Pinot Noir; a total of 17 gold, 37 silver, and 43 bronze awards overall). In 2002 I longed to do something new. While it seemed impossible, given my fifteen gallon Demptos barrel, I yearned to recreate in the fermentation process my table blend experiment.

Many of you wonderful commercial winemakers know me and my comrades. We come with an empty garbage can begging for tolerance in exchange for cash. Almost invariable we are greeted warmly and engaged in conversation, especially when we have previous product samples. Thank you all for your wonderful

In Issue 37 of the *Pinot-File*, I asked readers to submit a short article on Pinot Noir. The winner was home winemaker Dale Bartley from Northern California. He will receive a bottle of ultra-premium Pinot Noir and a collectable *PinotFile* hat and t-shirt as his prize. I have published his article here with only slight editing. I have also included another fine article that was submitted by Susan Steinman of New Jersey.

hospitality! However, I found no volunteers willing to contribute a bucket of Pinot Noir grapes to my noble dream. Finally, I approached Adam Lee at Siduri, where I had been a frequent customer. He and his wife Diana are meticulous winegrowers who contract grapes by the acre and carefully survey every bunch of grapes that enter their fermentation tanks. I was sure that they would consider me unworthy and braced myself for another polite rejection. Surprisingly, Adam replied, "Sure, come by and take a gallon of each must." I almost fainted in disbelief.

This was the launch of Pinot Noir Excalibur. The 2002 Excalibur consisted of one gallon of must from thirteen vineyards stretching from Santa Barbara to the Willamette Valley with each new must added to the ongoing fermentation over a six week period. The resulting wine, needless to say, was extremely limited in supply... but, generous in complexity! I was unhappy, though, with having some skins in the must for six weeks and detected a lack of vitality in this complex wine. The legend was still lacking.

I was lacking too, that is, lacking the courage to ask Adam for a second indulgence. But in 2004, he asked me if I would like to make the Excalibur again. This time, twenty-two vineyards were fermented in three separate batches in three consecutive weeks and then blended together at the end of fermentation. The complexity in this wine was equal to its vitality. The quantity surpassed 15 gallons! This wine will see some competition, as will the 2005 Excalibur sourced from eighteen different vineyards.

"The stuff from which legends grow" could impact the widespread devotion to single vineyard Pinot.

Tasting notes from July, 2006 (Dale Bartley):

2002 Estate Bartley Pinot Noir Excalibur Medium string bikini, see through clarity, double pyramids of tannin and acids causing some puckering as imagined taste enhanced the shimmering and silky surface tension marked with waves of undulating dreams. 37-22-36. Whiffs of steam follow cold soak.



THE ESTATE BARTLEY

2002

Pinot Noir Excalibur

Thirteen low yield vineyards from Santa Barbara to Oregon's Willamette Valley were fermented together for 28 days in this search for the stuff from which legends grow. The result was bottled nude under full moon by left-handed Druid nymphs fire-dancing with giant frogs through peacock feathers, gold webs and azure fog in San Rafael, California.

THE ESTATE BARTLEY Crowning the ridge separating San Rafael and Terra Linda lies a small estate surrounded by eucalyptus and evergreen trees. The estate's master building commands 360-degree views of the San Francisco Bay Area. This is

THE ESTATE BARTLEY.

After years searching the nation for an ideal winery site, the family found it in this estate's garage. In this mix of concrete, no soil and high elevation, exist the ideal conditions for garbage can winemaking **Above all, it** is this family's deep devotion to drinking that has brought you this wine. **Heed this** wine-maker's philosophy: "I Drink, Therefore I Was."

Anyone Know a Good Adjective for Pinot?

I am a Pinot Noir “consumer.” What that means to me, is that I am essentially unaffiliated with any trade or industry player. My husband, Andy, and I, attend as many “Pinot-focused” events as our day jobs and East Coast schedules permit. Perhaps there are a few of you out there reading this essay who recognize our name, or, if my picture were here, would say, “Hey, I think I know that gal.” That warms my heart and speaks volumes about us Pinot people. We are a special breed. In that vein, permit me to take my passion to a new level and publicly share my thoughts about us ‘regular folk’ who drink Pinot Noir and its intangibly wonderful effect on our lives.

If you are reading the *PinotFile*, then I suspect you “get it.” But what exactly IS that? It’s a personal thing, isn’t it? Let me start off by confessing that I do not recall the name of the Pinot Noir I drank that convinced me “she’s the one.” It was probably eight or nine years ago. I am ashamed to admit that, but there is something cathartic about doing so. Besides, doesn’t that mean that I am attracted to the core beauty of the grape and not deterred by blind loyalty to a particular name or winemaker? That Pinot Noir, whatever she was, “stirred” me in a way that no other wine varietal ever did. It spoke to me and conveyed the message of serenity and a sense that all could be right in the world. It was summertime, that I remember. After that experience, I nudged Andy to open a Pinot Noir as much as possible. Oh, he liked it too, in fact very much so, but the instant metamorphosis I encountered did not reach him at that point. By the time the colder weather rolled around, Andy was more inclined to drink wine other than Pinot Noir. As a cooperative partner, I partook, but always pushed for Pinot Noir. My cooperative and loving husband soon realized that this was VERY important to me and began acquiring a cellar full of many different Pinot Noirs. He also acquired a basket of Pinot Noir geek knowledge that would make a pinoaficionado proud. I became my own case study in search of the intangible series of adjectives that adequately describe my relationship with Pinot Noir. I am still searching. “Spiritual” has made it to the list, but somehow, that just doesn’t capture it all. Maybe that’s the point. Maybe it’s not meant to be captured. After all, Pinot Noir is that unpredictable princess that supersedes any lofty adjective.

My mother unexpectedly passed away last September. I lost my best friend and soul mate. Mom drank Pinot Noir with us. Dad didn’t. He said that wine made him sleepy. My Dad is a very successful physician, who is a great husband and father, but his vocational endeavor was his passion. Mom loved to hear about our various Pinot-focused exploits and lived vicariously through our adventures. She delighted in hearing how we made yet another friend in the most unlikely of situations, such as in a restaurant when the only thing adjacent diners had in common with us was a good bottle of wine. Wine aficionados are such nice people, aren’t they? Mom was a wine buddy and through that, experienced some of the pleasures she sought but could not realize. Even though Mom’s health began to deteriorate, she still wanted that glass of Pinot Noir to share with us.

Mom’s passing hit my Dad very hard. Almost fifty years of marriage and they were still the light of each other’s life. While Dad’s stoicism and clinical nature at times prevented him from saying, “carpe diem,” and living in the moment, Mom’s death changed that to a great degree. He drinks Pinot Noir now and often toasts Mom when he imbibes. Hey, I may be on to something here. The elegant lady has transformative powers, perhaps? The power to help us transform to a life of self-knowledge, understanding and acceptance?

I have asked Pinot Noir people to throw out a thought when it comes to Pinot. Most say some version of “sharing the moment with special people.” Maybe it is as simple as that and I am searching too hard to come up with that elusive list of adjectives. I think I will stop searching now and accept that I will never quite put my finger on it, and that is okay. Thanks, Mom, you did it again. I love you.

Ex-Duke Rebuttal

In Issue 44 of the *PinotFile*, I reported on the ex-duke's attempts to have his title, "Duke of Pinot", restored. His horse, "Prince of Pinot," has received its official halter and nameplate and has been moved to Hidden Springs Ranch in Yarnell, Arizona and will begin training for the Fall track season. I have summarized his rebuttal to my recent feature on ex-dukedom.

I think it will do the readers of the *PinotFile* well to understand what I have gone through, to share my pain and agony, and perhaps not make the same mistakes as I have. Over the years prior to my coronation (editor's note: none that I knew of, unless he is referring to self-coronation), the Prince and I often shared our passion for the latest releases of Pinot Noir, often exchanging notes and bottles. This shared passion for the best Pinot Noir was confirmed at various venues around the country and abroad including Le Grand Crew wine dinners, Society for Wine Education meetings, Les Amis de Escoffier Society events, the International Pinot Noir Celebration and other life-affirming events. As our palates matured, we both came to revere the finicky grape. We both strongly agreed that a well-crafted Pinot Noir was the epitome of winegrowing, presenting the senses with all that the Earth and God could offer a mere mortal. I still believe this.

Even though I felt quite close to Pinot Noir, I was never a true loyalist, and continued to look at other varietals. Obstinate I was and the Prince viewed my dalliance as a property of my Italian heritage. Now years after I lost my title, I have the strength to tell the truth. Yes, the Amarone and Brunello tastings I sponsored were strongly influenced by my heritage. And my brief fling with Rieslings could be explained by my exchange student year in Germany as a youth.

But the Prince looked more deeply into my soul than I ever could. One day in my wine cellar, he confronted me. He looked about and saw the dwindling bins of Burgundy and empty shelves previously brimming with gems from the Carneros, Russian River Valley, and the Willamette Valley. As I looked around, I stuttered and my blood pressure dropped. Trying to recover, I pointed out my last reduction sauce was made with Pinot Noir (weak). The Prince's Irish face turned a bright red. My title was revoked on the spot. He fumed. He was right. I had strayed too far. I was devastated and felt unworthy to look at my bin of La Tache or even finger my remaining bottles of Clos Vougeot. I hit rock bottom.

I am happy to report that recently I have had a re-awakening. The DuMols, Dehlingers, Rochiolis, and Musignys are now prominently displayed in my cellar. I have hidden my magnum of '47 Cheval Blanc, '61 Lafite, and '78 Heitz Martha's. My small vertical of d'Yquem is relegated to a bottom rack. I now see the world through Pinot Noir colored glasses and am comfortable with my slow ascension. I believe my title will be restored eventually, but for the time being, I am content to remember the glory of days past.



Note: As I read this e-mail, I began to feel sympathy for ex-duke, and I wiped a tear from the corner of my eye. However, in the last paragraph of the e-mail, he stated that, "I happily sacrificed a few cases of Bordeaux for him (the horse)." Now is this something a fervent pinotaficionado would say? I think the chances of reinstatement are again bleak.

In ex-duke's defense, a reader wrote: "As you indicated, Dookie has been a traveler in non-Pinot lands. He has, however, carried your message into the wilderness where men would not enter. He has served to guide the barbarians and shown them the true path. Before Dookie, we drank Norton from the Hermann appellation of the Missouri Valley and Chambourcin from the Ste. Genevieve appellation of the Mississippi Valley. Our belief had been, "plonk is plonk," Now with increased knowledge, more and more Pinot Noir is being purchased. There may not be enough for future Pinot lovers. Rein him in (not the horse of course). Do what must be done and reward him with the title."



And finally, this comment from a reader with an opposing view about the ex-duke (above): “Regarding the ex-duke, if it weren’t so pathetic just listening to him whine, I’d ask why he let you take away his (presumably) self-granted title in the first place. Besides, “Duke” is such an unimaginative title (no alliteration). Pathetic dweeb! He should be glad he’s rid of it!”

Seeking Pinot Treasures from Oregon

The last two issues of the *PinotFile* dealt with the IPNC and Oregon Pinot Noir. While it is possible to purchase fine Oregon Pinot Noir directly from the producers, there are a number of reasons to seek out reliable retailers: (1) the retailer can often supply considerable background information, passion and personal experience and may know the producer intimately; (2) a fine wine store carries a broad selection allowing you to pick and choose from a number of producers and assemble a mix case with ease; (3) significant discounts may be available in some instances; (4) some limited production Pinot Noirs may only be available to you through a fine retailer; and 5) you can taste several different producers at the store’s wine bar and compare. I am, of course, referring to smaller wine shops and not large retailers like Costco, which is now the biggest retailer of wine in the country. In contrast to Costco, the small wine store can provide intimate customer service and often can boast of having tasted all of the wines in the store. The following sources for premium Oregon Pinot Noir are recommended.

Avalon of Oregon

I have admired the Avalon website (www.avalonwine.com) for years for it provides far more useful information about Oregon Pinot Noir than any other on the web. Also, there is a customer newsletter via PDF and print along with e-mail alerts about newest releases. In addition to the web-based business, Avalon of Oregon operates a retail store in downtown Corvallis. During my recent excursion to Oregon, I went to visit the dedicated wine lovers behind this impressive retail operation.

After a hearty welcome from owner Jean Yates and store manager Marcus Looze, we sat at the comfortable tasting bar in this quaint wine store and tasted through some recent releases. Jean (right as a child ballerina) told me that Avalon started eighteen years ago as a bed and breakfast in the Oregon wine country, and then became a retail wine store. She began selling wine on the web in 1999. The store is located in a one hundred-year-old building, the Corvallis Arms Hotel. Jean resides in a 102-year-old farmhouse nearby in Alpine, just west of the Willamette Valley wine growing region. Because of her long years in the wine business, she is well-connected and can obtain good allocations of highly-desirable Oregon Pinot Noirs. I was impressed with the selection she had displayed at the store including notables Anne Amie, Belle Pente, Belle Vallee, Beaux Freres, Elk Cove, Hamacher, Shea Wine Cellars, and Van Duzer Vineyards, as well as many very small boutique producers. All of the wines she sells she personally tastes with her staff and having tasted with her, I came away impressed with her palate. Her store offers a wine tasting club, periodic classes on wine, and frequent wine tasting events. In addition, the store stocks gourmet food from Oregon and the Northwest and hosts gourmet food tastings. Jean, herself, writes and publishes the newsletters and updates and manages the beautifully designed and written website. When you visit the website, you will be immediately impressed with the photographs of vineyards, wineries, and the Oregon countryside. Jean's passion is really photography and she hopes to eventually retire, travel and photograph to her heart's content.



Tasting notes:

2004 720 Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 439 cases, \$22. Chris Heider makes 720 cases of wine in 720 square feet of winery in tiny Philomath, Oregon. This Pinot was recently bottled and needs a little time to open up. The nose is quite floral with bright cherry notes. Pleasant red raspberry flavors on the palate finish up with bright acidity. Very appealing.

2005 Jezebel Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$18. A second label of Daedalus Cellars that was created by Peter Rosback and Aron Hess. It is a blend of several vineyards. Recently bottled. A big, dark, muscular wine with notable tannins. Dark fruits dominate the nose and juicy flavors. Finishes with good acidity. This Pinot would do fine with hearty food.

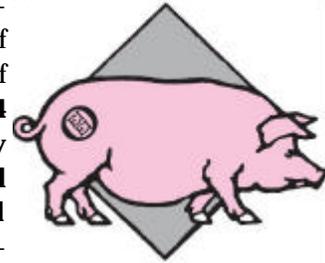
2003 Stevenson-Barrie Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$28. A joint effort from Scott Barie and winemaker Mike Stevenson who also is the winemaker for Panther Creek. Don't let the plain labels scare you away. Attractive aromas of dark fruit and toasty oak lead to a full mouth feel and noticeable oak at the end. Still brooding, needs more time.

2003 Stevenson-Barrie Freedom Hill Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$28. This Pinot has a wonderfully expressive nose with herbs, barnyard and floral highlights. It is noticeably more elegant than many of the '03s from Oregon. Both red and dark fruits are beautifully composed in a nicely balanced package. Serious juice and a must buy.

More details on these producers and others are on the Avalon website. Phone 541-752-7418. The retail store is located at 201 SW 2nd Street, Corvallis, Oregon 97333.

The Tasting Room at Carlton

The small town of Carlton, Oregon, is a hotbed of Pinot Noir. There are currently sixteen wineries, four tasting rooms, and a gourmet restaurant (Cuvée). Jay McDonald, owner of The Tasting Room at Carlton was one of the first to set up shop here (1995). He carries only top-of-the-line Oregon Pinot Noirs from producers like Bergstrom, Belle Pente, Black Cap, Broadley, Domaine Drouhin, Domaine Serene, J.K. Carriere, and Soter. He also carries a number of the wines in large formats and stocks some older vintages as well. Open daily, his small tasting bar offers several of his wines that are in stock. Jay also uses his twelve years of experience in winemaking to produce his own EIEIO & Company lineup of Pinot Noirs. His 2004 lineup is from impressive vineyard sources: **2004 EIEIO Broadley Vineyard Pinot Noir** (44 cases, \$75), **2004 EIEIO Canary Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir** (134 cases, \$75), **2004 EIEIO Meredith Mitchell Vineyard Pinot Noir** (135 cases, \$75), and **2004 EIEIO Wind Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir** (156 cases, \$50). Except for the Wind Hill which Jay says is distinctly feminine, the single vineyard wines are rich, fat and viscous, but retain a nice balance reflective of the vintage. Jay also produces a **2004 EIEIO Cuvee E Pinot Noir** (411 cases, \$26) which is a blend of several vineyards. Jay claims this one smells like Pinot fruits and “blueberries over hot Pinhead Scottish Oatmeal.” And on the palate, “that wacky and waxy fruit known as Carambola or Star Fruit.” You just have to know Jay to understand his wine descriptives. His final ode to the pig is a little piggie for everyday drinking. Jay says it is called by various names including, **Pinot Pig, Swine Wine, Wilbur’s Reserve, and Charlotte’s Choice**. Jay says “it’s swilliciously superb and drinking great, and the packaging will make you squeal.” Just a simple Pinot pleasure at a good price (\$20). Like the *PinotFile*, EIEIO & Company separates the serious from the swill.



EIEIO & Company website is www.onhisfarm.com. The tasting room (below) is located at 105 W Main St., Carlton, Oregon 97111. The phone is 503-852-6733. Sign up for the mailing list and the excellent newsletter. Oink.



The Carlton Winemaker's Studio

The Studio is the first multiple winery facility built in Oregon. Opened in 2002, this winery co-op was a collaborative effort of winemakers Eric Hamacher and Luisa Ponzi who partnered with Ned and Kirsten Lumpkin of Lazy River Vineyard in Yamhill, Oregon. It is the first winery registered with the United States Green Building Council and is awaiting certification from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The Studio uses a passive solar system and recycled materials from deconstructed buildings.

It has been commonplace more recently for small artisanal winemakers to work together in facilities that have state-of-the-art equipment that they could not afford to own individually (ie Central Coast Wine Warehouse in Santa Maria and Copain Custom Crush in Santa Rosa). The feature that makes the Studio unique is that it contains a tasting room and actively promotes the producers who make wine in the facility. The tasting room is open daily from February through December, from 12-5 PM and in January by appointment (hey, winemakers need some downtime too). Tours of the Studio are available by appointment.



Current producers at the Studio are Andrew Rich, Boedecker, Bryce, Dominio IV, Hamacher, Lazy River, Meriwether, Ribbon Ridge and J. Daan. There is also a Studio line of wines made by Eric Hamacher. Visit the website at www.winemakersstudio.com. The phone is 503-852-6100. The address is 801 North Scott St, Carlton, Oregon 97111.

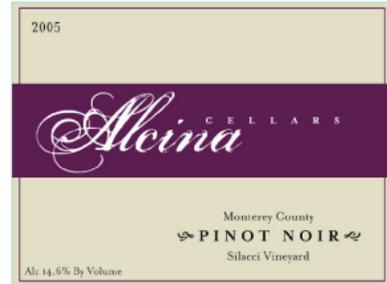
Tasting Notes:

2002 Hamacher Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13% alc., about 1500 cases,\$40. Eric Hamacher makes small quantities of highly-regarded Pinot Noir and Chardonnay at the Studio. He has been a staunch supporter of blending vineyards for his Pinot Noirs, but in late 2005 he released a 2002 Durant Vineyard Pinot Noir. The 2002 blend was only recently released and I have tasted it twice. The nose shows off dark fruits and a hint of vanilla. Dark berries, cranberries and sour cherry dominate the flavors. The finish is a bit rustic and earthy and the brisk acidity cries out for food.

Flurry of New Pinot Releases

Summer offerings for Fall releases of the 2004 and 2005 vintage in California and Oregon are hot now. I have listed several of particular interest.

Alcina Cellars Greg Piatigorski began his boutique winery in 2002 with the release of two Pinot Noirs (Pisoni, Sangiacomo). They sold out quickly by word of mouth. Miniscule yields in 2005 limited and Alcina is still trying to settle in with a number of vineyard sources. The latest release is a **2005 Alcina Cellars Silacci Vineyard Monterey County Pinot Noir** (115 cases, \$44). The Silacci Vineyard is one you will be hearing about in the near future. It is in a very cold location five miles north of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. Monterey gap fog and winds keep the fruit cool, extending the growing season. Ripening can be a concern here. The fruit came from a Pisoni clone block on its own root stock. Aged in 20% new French oak. www.alcinacellars.com. Sold through a mailing list.



george wine company george levcoff is a one man winery making fabulous Pinot Noir with stylish elegance out of the Moshin Winery on Westside Road. His Pinot Noirs are the darling of Las Vegas with every major restaurant from Alex Restaurant in the Wynn Hotel to the Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill in the MGM Grand carrying his wine on their list. Unfortunately, the weather in 2005 did not cooperate along the Sonoma Coast with rain and wind adversely affecting fruit set. Many vineyards on the Sonoma Coast produced only 10-20% of their usual yield. The



result for Vintage III of george wine company is that george received ten times more grapes from his Russian River Valley source (Martinelli Nuptial Vineyard) than his Sonoma Coast source (Hirsch Vineyard). As a result, he is offering 6-packs of **2004 george Martinelli Nuptial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (13.9% alc., \$300), and 12-packs consisting of 11 bottles of Martinelli Nuptial and 1 bottle of **2004 george Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.3% alc., \$600). The Martinelli Nuptial wine is a blend of five Dijon clones and Pommard. The Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir is a blend of the Mt. Eden clone and Pommard. www.georgewine.com. The phone is 707-495-7783. The Pinot is sold through a mailing list.

August West Winemaker Ed Kurtzman has teamed with Gary Franscioni (owner of Rosella's Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands) and Howard Graham (owner of Graham Family Vineyard in the Russian River Valley) to make a small amount of Pinot Noir since 2002 under the August West label. Ed has been making Pinot Noir since 1994 at Bernardus in Carmel Valley, Chalone, and Testarossa. He met partners Gary and Howard while he was winemaker at Testarossa. Ed currently is the winemaker for Freeman and Ft. Ross as well. Ed is a delightful personality, a bit shy but very warm. I would suggest you get to know him. The two 2004 Pinot Noirs were actually released a few months ago but can still be found in retail stores. **2004 August West Graham Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (160 cases, \$50). I recently tasted the **2004 August West Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** (200 cases, \$50). This is really an impressive effort. Very harmonious and beautifully balanced and more gentle than many Santa Lucia Pinots. A veritable Pinot-gasm. The Rosella's Vineyard continues to star from this appellation. The website is www.augustwest.com. The phone is 415-225-2891.



Ponzi Vineyards Ponzi Vineyards is one of the standard bearers for Oregon Pinot Noir. Winemaking is in the capable hands of Luisa Ponzi who was formally educated in Burgundy. The family owns over 100 acres of certified sustainable vineyards in the Chehalem Mountains. The historic estate winery, vineyard and tasting room is open daily in Beaverton, Oregon. The 2004 vintage was more classic for Oregon with early cool rains followed by warm autumn days. At the IPNC, I tasted the **2004 Ponzi Vineyards Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** (\$50, \$15% off on pre-release). This is a young, but obviously pedigreed wine. It is at once bold and luscious, but also refined and balanced. Ponzi Vineyards is at 14665 SW Winery Lane, Beaverton, Oregon 97007. The phone is 503-628-1227. The website is www.ponziwines.com. Don't forget the excellent white wines and Pinot Noir "Rosato."



St. Innocent 2004 produced a stellar lineup for winemaker Mark Vlossak at St. Innocent. Earlier this year the Temperance Hill Vineyard, Shea Vineyard and White Rose Vineyard Pinot Noirs were released and wine critics took notice. Now St. Innocent has released their final Pinots from the 2004 vintage. These wines were made from the best three barrels of each contiguous vineyard, Seven Springs Vineyard and Anden Vineyard. The **2004 St. Innocent Seven Springs Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** (60 cases, \$36) was fermented in a Burgundy-style large oak Vicard fermenter. The **2004 St. Innocent Anden Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** (\$36) was adored by Robert Parker. As Parker also pointed out, St. Innocent has held the line on prices despite the publicity received in recent years. The website is www.stinnocent.com. The phone is 503-378-1526. The winery is located at 1360 Tandem Ave NE, Salem, Oregon 97303



Williams Selyem Almost 10 years post Burt and Ed, Williams Selyem continues to expand its offerings, plant vineyards, and sell to an enthusiastic pinotophile audience. The winery is now farming the Drake Estate Vineyard along the Russian River in Guerneville and Litton vineyard situated along Westside Road close to Allen and Rochioli Vineyards. Winemaker Bob Cabral has 27 vintages of winemaking behind him. About the only criticism that can be levied at Williams Selyem is the prices (ouch!). I am afraid it is a fact of life that the recent popularity of Pinot Noir will invariably lead to escalation of prices. What appears to be steep now (the Precious Mountain Vineyard bottling is \$85), will probably seem reasonable ten years from now. You might want to get a night job. The single vineyard lineup of offerings is impressive: **2004 Williams Selyem Bucher Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.2% alc., \$49), **2004 Williams Selyem Vista Verde Vineyard San Benito County Pinot Noir** (14.1% alc., \$49), **2004 Williams Selyem Peay Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.1% alc., \$49), **2004 Williams Selyem Flax Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.4% alc., \$54), **2004 Williams Selyem Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir** (14.5% alc., \$54), **2004 Williams Selyem Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** (13.9% alc., \$59), **2004 Williams Selyem Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.0% alc., \$69), **2004 Williams Selyem Hirsch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.1% alc., \$69), **2004 Williams Selyem Rochioli Riverblock Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.4% alc., \$72), **2004 Williams Selyem Allen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (14.1% alc., \$75), and **2004 Williams Selyem Precious Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (14.3% alc., \$85). The wines are sold only through a mailing list. No tasting room The website is www.williamselyem.com. The phone is 707-433-6425.

Pinot Dinners

The Culinary Institute of America Third Annual Robert M. Parker, Jr. Tasting and Seminar

This event benefits *The Wine Advocate* Scholarship Fund for professional wine studies at The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Greystone in the Napa Valley. The focus for this year's event is Pinot Noir and red Burgundy. Parker has chosen twelve Pinot Noirs and red Burgundies which he will share in a blind tasting from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM on October 26, 2006. Karen MacNeil, chair of professional wine studies at the CIA at Greystone is the director of the event.

The Robert M. Parker, Jr. Seminars and Tastings are held every October in the CIA's EcoLab Theater. 100 guests are able to interact with Mr. Parker as the tasting progresses. The wines are tasted blind and at random to bring additional intrigue to the tasting.

Tickets are \$500 per person and include a post-event sparkling wine reception at the CIA's Rudd Center for Professional Wine Studies. For information, or to purchase tickets via credit card, contact Reuben Katz at 707-967-2305 or r_katz@culinary.edu. Checks also can be mailed to Reuben Katz at the CIA at Greystone, 2555 Main St., St. Helena, CA 94574.

Butterfly Café Pinot Noir Tasting and Sales Event

Several noted Pinot Noir producers including Archery Summit, Calera, Clos La Chance, Littorai, Morgan, Patz & Hall, Testarossa, and Walter Hansel will be pouring at this event. In addition, Benchmark Wine Group will be pouring Burgundies from their European collection. All wines poured at the event will be available for purchase. The event is on September 6, 2006, from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the Butterfly Café, a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence Restaurant in San Francisco. Appetizers will be served including items like American Kobe beef sliders with caramelized onions, sweet soy glazed figs with Roquefort and huckleberry, Kalua pig in butter lettuce cups with hoison bbq sauce, grilled lamb and grape kebabs with cucumber sauce, duck confit spring rolls with Chinese mustard, and charred tomato gazpacho with avocado foam. Cost is \$45.

Oops, I just found out the event is limited to 225 people and is sold out. For future events check the website, www.butterflywineevents.com. The phone number is 800-738-3743. Butterfly Café is located at Pier 33 Embarcadero, San Francisco.

Paul Hobbs Winemaker Dinner at Providence Restaurant

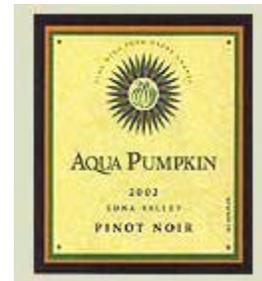
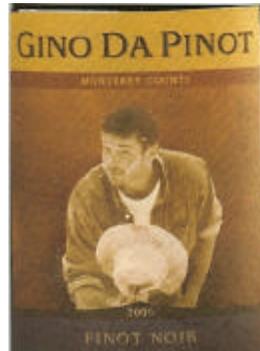
Chef Michael Cimarusti hosts regular winemaker dinners at his highly rated Providence Restaurant, 5955 Melrose Ave, Los Angeles, California (323-460-4170). On September 6, 2006 he will feature noted winemaker Paul Hobbs. Cimarusti has created a five-course tasting menu to pair with the sumptuous wines of Paul Hobbs Winery. The wines include 2002 Paul Hobbs Richard Dinner Vineyard Chardonnay, 2004 Bramere Chardonnay from Mendoza, Argentina, 2004 Paul Hobbs Russian River Pinot Noir (paired with troll caught wild king salmon a la plancha, Australian pepperberry, golden beets), a surprise wine from the Paul Hobbs library, and 2001 Tokaj, "Sweet Life" Arvay & Co, Hungary.

Paul Hobbs was one of the first California winemakers to focus on single-vineyard wines. He was also an early champion of unfiltered and unfiltered wines and use of native yeasts. Besides his success in California, he is a leader in Argentina's ongoing winemaking revolution.

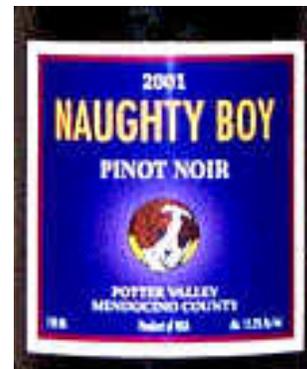
Cost is \$160 per person exclusive of tax and gratuity. RSVP between 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM at the phone number above.

Wacky Pinot Labels

Where do people come up with this crazy names for Pinot Noir? I really get a laugh from many of them, but others leave me blank. I think “Gina Da Pinot” from The Other Guys (a division of Don Sebastiani & Sons) is very clever. But “Aqua Pumpkin” (Ken Volk’s second label) makes no sense at all. “Bad Fish” from California is just plain bad taste. “Sideways” uses the success of the movie to lure consumers.



A curious one I recently ran across is “Naughty Boy.” Now that conjures up images of something forbidden but tempting. M.J. and Jim Scott are “two aging hipsters” who produce this Pinot Noir from six acres which are organically farmed northeast of Ukiah in Mendocino’s Potter Valley. The wine-maker is Greg Graziano of Domaine St. Gregory. The wine spends 18 months in oak casks. Total production is 450 cases (\$21). It is available from www.weimax.com and www.naughtyboyvineyards.com and apparently is rather respectable.




PrinceofPinot.com

Look for the upcoming issue on
Summer Pinot Camp

Readers Uncorked

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Another Wine Movie Coming

***A Good Year*, directed by Ridley Scott (*Alien, Gladiator*), and starring Russell Crowe and Albert Finney, is scheduled to open in November in the United States. Crowe plays Max Skinner, a London bond trader whose uncle (Albert Finney) leaves him an 18th century chateau and vineyard in Provence. Skinner reluctantly moves to Provence to escape financial regulators who are investigating him. He sees dollar signs in the potential for a cult garage wine. However, his life goes sideways when beautiful American Christie Roberts (played by Abbie Cornish from Australia) appears and claims to be Skinner's uncle's illegitimate daughter and rightful heir to the chateau. The film is based on a novel by Peter Mayle and will be filmed in Luberon, where Mayle has lived for several years.**

A Pinot Prince's Wife's Rebuttal

My wife was a bit peeved about the article I wrote in the *PinotFile* ("Helpful Information for Married Pinot Geeks" in Issue 45). She accused me of having a "wine-track mind." She claimed all I do is think about Pinot.

I was taken aback, but patiently approached the subject. I told her that her claim was not so. I also think about football, tennis, performance cars, doo-wop music, Mexican food, and barbeque. I told her that she was one of the top 10 things I thought about. I offered that I often dreamed of just lying in bed with her for long periods just hugging.

Fortunately, this put her mind at ease. One of the real benefits of getting older is that you really develop a way with women.

