

**I Be Pinot
Drinking**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 6, Issue 20

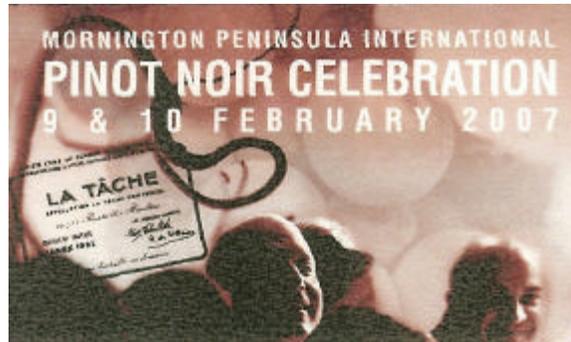
March 27, 2007

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Aussie Pinot Noir Celebration a Ripper

Pinot is hitting a high note worldwide and in Australia the leader of the band is David Lloyd of **Eldridge Estate**, a distinguished producer of Pinot Noir in the Red Hill area of the Mornington Peninsula (Victoria) in southeast Australia. Known to many of his cronies as “The Clone Ranger,” because of his research and interest in the clonal diversity of Pinot Noir, David is the director of the Mornington Peninsula International Pinot Noir Celebration, held every two years in early February and modeled after the International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville, Oregon. The most recent event was February 9 & 10, 2007. David has sent me a full report on the happenings at this, the third MPIPNC, titled “Celebrating Pinot Noir Down Under.”



At this point, many readers are probably asking, “Why bother?” Everyone knows Australia is famous for Shiraz and to some extent, Cabernet Sauvignon, but Pinot Noir? It turns out, there is considerable international interest in Pinot Noir from Australia. Australia produced about 36,000 tons of Pinot Noir in 2005, a significant amount (although it pales in comparison to the 420,000 tons of Shiraz).

The MPIPNC is held at a 5 star venue (Lindenderry at Red Hill) about 90 minutes south of Melbourne in rural Red Hill. The event is centered around tasting celebrated Pinot Noirs from top winemakers in beautiful surroundings. The Aussie bonhomie and hospitality adds to the appeal of the celebration.

Guest wineries included Domaine de la Romanee-Conti, J.J. Confuron, Domaine de l’Arlot, and Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret from Burgundy, Cristom and Domaine Serene from Oregon, Kosta Browne and Littorai from California, and Felton Road, Mountford, and Valli from New Zealand. A host of Australian Pinot Noir producers were present as well.



The first tasting was moderated by the famous Australian wine author, Jeremy Oliver, and the influential UK wine writer, Matthew Jukes. Jukes is a wine buyer for London's Bibendum restaurant, recent judge at the Sydney Wine Show, the creator of the online 100 Best Australian Wines, and author of the recently released *The Wine Book*. The session was titled, "An Exploration of International Pinot Noir Styles." **The 2003 Littorai Hirsch Vineyard** was well received and a great example of fruit power balanced with lovely oak handling. Many tasters preferred it to the **2001 Mongeard-Mugneret Echezeaux**. The **2003 Domaine Serene Evanstad Reserve** was a shift to the world of the fruit bomb reinforced when compared to the **2004 Valli Bannockburn** from Central Otago which showed classic sweet and sour cherry fruits. The final wine was the very stylish and elegant **2004 Main Ridge Estate** from the Mornington Peninsula. A luncheon followed the tasting, prepared by local chefs and held at seven wineries across the region.

The second tasting was "An Exploration of Australian Pinot Noir" with wines from South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania, all from the 2004 vintage. One of the highlights was **Kooyong** from the Mornington Peninsula (imported to the United States by Vine Street Imports). The wine was rich with sweet



cherry fruits and a nice dose of plum on the finish. **Curly Flat** from the Macedon region of Victoria was equally admired with its intense maraschino cherry fruit and subtle oak highlights. Jancis Robinson raved about this wine on a recent visit down under. The other wines in this bracket, **Savaterre**, **Pirrie**, **DeBortoli Reserve**, and **Baratt** showed lovely fruit, length and texture, but David's palate was nudged back by the **Kooyong** and **Curly Flat**. It was refreshing to hear the candor and honesty of the winemakers from these wineries discussing oak influence and alcohol and other technical issues.

The final tasting of day one contrasted the styles of two Burgundy domains, **Jean-Jacques Confuron** and **Domaine de l'Arlot**. The wines were represented by their Australian importers. One of the facilitators set up quite an elaborate options game with his colleagues and the rest of the attendees, trying to look at the terroir and then the hand of the winemaker. Keynote speaker Matthew Jukes did a credible job of explaining these features as he untangled the six wines in front of the whole audience.

The day concluded with a sensational al fresco meal on the beautiful grounds of Lindenderry. A wide range of 34 local Australian Pinot Noirs, along with a similar quantity of Pinot Gris and Chardonnay were offered. David did notice that many of the visiting winemakers seemed to prefer a cold beer in the warm evening. In fact, David says he was sure he has a photo of Michael Browne of Kosta Browne sitting back having a “cold one.”

Day two commenced with a session titled “An Exploration of Pinot Noir from Benchmark Producers across the World.” The first flight consisted of wines from producers in New Zealand, Oregon, and California. **Felton Road** from Central Otago and **Mountford** from Waipara, **Cristom** from Oregon, and **Kosta Browne** from the Russian River Valley of California all discussed their wines and the unique terroirs where their wines originated. Michael Browne gained enormous respect from the audience defending his lush, fruity style of Pinot Noir in the face of criticism from the session facilitators.

The second flight featured wines from the host region, the Mornington Peninsula. The most famous of these was **Paringa Estate** which seems to have a firm grip on the Australian wine show circuit bolstered by a long line of success as a Gold Medal and Trophy winner. The wine had lovely, rich cherry flavors balanced with oak in a style that had great length. **Ten Minutes by Tractor** is a group of vineyards that share equipment and they showed a wine from the cooler part of the Mornington Peninsula. The wine had darker cherry flavors and a hint of blackberry in a style that could well have been slotted in any of the previous brackets. The **Yabby Lake Vineyard** Pinot Noir was from one of the warmer parts of the Mornington Peninsula. It was a plush style of Pinot Noir, oozing ripe red berry flavors with a plum finish that lasted a long time. This was a very popular wine at the event. The other three wines showed the same contrast across the region. **Hurley Vineyard** was an opulent style with some spicy, forest floor complexity. **Stoniers Reserve** is sourced from a vineyard close to Hurley, but the style was more elegant at the cherry end of the spectrum. **Port Phillip Estate** is on an east-facing block on a hillside and had sweet, Bing cherry flavor with elegance and nice weight.

The attendees were then herded into a fleet of minibuses and sent across the Mornington Peninsula to various wineries for lunch. Each winery served several flights of wine matched with wines from their own vineyard along with those of one or two nearby wineries. Jim Clendenen of **Au Bon Climat** and Terry Speizer of **Domaine Alfred** supplied some wines for the luncheon. These 2004 Pinot Noirs were in the big and rich style, well-suited to pair with a Saint Agur cheese dish prepared according to a recipe supplied by The Painted Lady Restaurant of Newberg, Oregon.

The final session was a “Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Tasting and Conversation with Aubert de Villaine and James Halliday.” Halliday initially covered the geological history of the DRC vineyards, along with, to steal a phrase, a brief history of time. The key point was that DRC has records of extreme heat, drought and cold extending back many, many centuries. In the context of this time frame, all present left feeling that the current period of climate change is not such a new phenomenon. Furthermore, DRC respects the soil as a living entity and cultivates it under biodynamic principles. The five DRC wines presented for tasting were all from the 2004 vintage.



2004 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Echezeaux Gorgeous! The nose had rich Bing cherry aromas and on the palate this was joined by some dark cherry fruit and a little blackberry. Great length and power. The wine was quick to open up, and Aubert said that this is typical for this wine.

2004 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Grands Echezeaux This wine showed red berry fruits, a bit of five spice, and feral forest floor. It promoted quite a deal of discussion both positive and negative, to which Aubert seemed to give a knowledgeable shrug of agreement.



2004 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Romanee St Vivant I have had wines from these vines many times, but none were as fine as this example. The glass seemed to ooze cherries. It breathed up to show great power and length with the red cherry/berry flavors giving way to a plummy finish. Power and elegance.



2004 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Richebourg This opened slightly reduced. I actually like to see a little reductive character in Pinot Noir as it helps to protect the wine. This wine was pretty tight and some described it as masculine. It had lovely cherry and spice notes with a superb mix of fruit and oak. The wine lingered for some time on the palate and left memories of plums as well as cherries.



2004 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti La Tache Le Tache was the wine that changed David's life some 30 years ago so this description may be a bit ambling. David used to make and drink Cabernet and wondered why people drank Burgundy until someone served a 1943 La Tache at dinner. It was served blind so David had no warning that he was about to meet something special. The wine was very pale and more brown than red, but the perfume and palate power sent him to another place. The 2004 La Tache is quite a different experience. It was served unmasked, yet it still seemed to grab his attention. It opened on the nose with what he described as cherry and char. He has seen this in many California Pinots, but not with the same understated fruit quality as experienced with this wine. With continued evolution, the nose revealed floral notes of roses and violets as well. On the palate, it had intense sweet red cherry flavors that expanded across the palate with a little mocha, clove, and toasty oak. It was a very complex and harmonious package.



After two days of heavenly pinotphilic endeavors ending with the 2004 La Tache, David was thoroughly satiated, but a few hours later, there was another surprise in store. The Grand Banquet is the closing event of the celebration and has a similar feel to events David has experienced in Oregon and New Zealand. A feature of the Grand Banquet was Pinot Noirs served from vintages 1999 to 2004 perfectly matched to the food courses. But David's focus was on the last wine, the **1999 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Vosne-Romanee**. He has had many 1999 Burgundies, and regards it as a great vintage. This DRC wine reinforced his beliefs. The guest speaker, British sports legend, wine collector, consumer and lover, Ian Botham, seemed to sneak quite a bit of this stuff. To be honest, David was waiting for the police to come and get him, because he was convinced that this was mass vinocide. The wine still seemed very youthful. Aromas of dark cherry and plum plus a little cinnamon. The palate was sheer muscle power with weighty cherries, plum and



spice. David had trouble working out if the spice was from fruit or oak, but in the end chose to sit back and enjoy the wine and soak in a lovely summer evening at beautiful Red Hill.

The next event will be held in February, 2009. Information will be forthcoming from David Lloyd at fizz@eldridgeestate.com.au or the event website at www.mpva.com.au.



David and Wendy Lloyd

The Pinot Noirs from Australia that I have been fortunate to taste have been exceptional. If you peruse older issues of the *PinotFile*, you will find reviews of Bindi and Curly Flats from the Macedon Ridges, and Main Ridge Estate, Yabby Lake, and Kooyong from the Mornington Peninsula, among others. Vine Street Imports (www.vsimports.com) imports Bindi, Moondarra, and Kooyong to the United States. Yabby Lake is handled by Paterno Wines International (www.terlatowines.com). Select retailers such as Hi Time (www.hitimewine.net) in Costa Mesa and The Jug Shop (www.jugshop.com) in San Francisco carry some Australian Pinot Noirs.

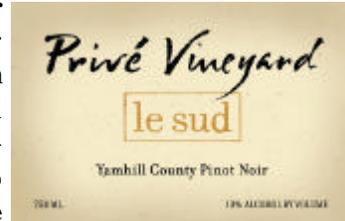
Matt Kramer, a noted American wine writer, recently spent three months touring Australian wineries. Known for being frank, Kramer told Jeni Port at www.theage.com.au his opinion of the local wine industry. Kramer laments, "Whether Australians know it or not - and I don't know whether they do or not - Australia has emerged in the last decade as the most powerful wine force in the world." The problem is, as Kramer points out, "Australia is dominated by a relative handful of mega wine companies who are not only masters of wine marketing, but also at creating quite good, stunningly inexpensive wines. But the big wineries of Australia don't give a damn about expression of place. Their business is blending, concocting wines. The biggest difference between Australia and California is that in California it's the high-end little guys who are setting the pace and the big boys try to copy them as best they can." During his stay in Australia, Kramer became known on the Mornington Peninsula, and everywhere else good Pinot Noir was made. When he attended the Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir Celebration, he liked what he saw, "Nearly all of the Mornington Pinots were lovely, even ethereal, wines that traded strongly on deftness with no inadequacy of flavor or depth."

Oregon Pinot Noir Tasting

A lively group of 15 winos gathered on a recent Monday afternoon to taste Oregon Pinot Noirs. Jay Selman, of Grape Radio fame, hosts a monthly wine tasting at which every participant brings a bottle or two and tasty food is provided by Picnics Deli. There is plenty of geeky talk about wine, but no one takes themselves too seriously. At the end, votes are tallied for the top four wines. There were 23 wines total and I have included some comments where appropriate. The top 4 wines are listed first.

FIRST 2004 Privé Le Sud Yamhill County Willamette Valley Pinot Noir

14.0% alc., \$50 (futures price). Mark and Tina Hammond hand craft their Pinot Noirs from two acres of vines planted on their estate on Chehalem Mountain. They bottle three wines, Le Sud from the south 1 acre, Le Nord from the north 1 acre, and Joie de Vivre, a reserve. Quantities are miniscule and demand is high. This Pinot is crafted in a feminine style. Light to medium bodied, it is lacy and understated but with considerable complexity. Notes of savory cherries, spice (especially cinnamon), and roses are featured in the nose and flavors. Oak is perfectly integrated and the whole package is meticulously balanced. Still a Lolita, it was one of those Pinot Noirs that defies adequate description. This wine was the overwhelming favorite of the tasting.



SECOND 2002 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Block 32 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$48. Composed of non-irrigated Wädenswil vines. A ripe and plush wine with plenty of tannic backbone. The finish of Asian-spiced red Pinot fruits was particularly appealing and lingering.



THIRD 2005 Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.75% alc., \$40. The aromatics are floral and fruity.

On the palate there are plenty of creamy sweet fruits with an earthiness and feral quality. The finish is clean and tidy with lively acidity.

FOURTH 1998 St. Innocent Seven Springs Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc.. A surprisingly youthful wine with too much tannin on the back end for me. Some tasters felt it could improve and soften with additional aging. Certainly built to age, but I think it will always retain a certain edginess. There was plenty of high-quality cherry and raspberry fruit on the palate.



1998 Thomas Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13% alc.. A controversial wine made in the Eyrie style that split the group. I found the aged bouquet appealing featuring leather, Asian spice and cherry. The fruit was light and demure.

1998 Tori Mor White Rose Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc.. A barnyard bouquet led to tart flavors of raspberry and strawberry. The acid trumped the fruit.

1999 Beaux Freres Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. Super ripe fruits with a hint of alcohol dominate the aromatics. There is plenty of stuffing - darker fruits, anise and toasty oak. The finish is dry, stemmy and woody. With a predominance of tannins, alcohol and a paucity of acid, the whole package lacks balance.

1999 Chehalem Jacob-Hart Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc.. Slightly oxidized, but still a decent drink. Rich nose of cherries and vanillin and a pleasing mid-palate sweet fruit array that was fading.

1999 Rex Hill Jacob-Hart Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., Terrific aromatics here with spices and tea notes. The flavors disappoint, however, and there was a thin, short finish lacking in acid.

2000 St. Innocent Cremant Willamette Valley Sparkling Wine 12.9% alc.. Slightly sweet, but very decent, if simple, drink.

2001 Lemelson Stermer Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc.. A little stink on the nose, a little harsh on the finish and just ordinary.

2002 Sine Qua Non Hollerin' M Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 15.4% alc.. A fruit-driven, pumped up, California Nuevo style Pinot Noir. Plenty of lip-smacking plush red and dark fruits. The alcohol is well-hidden. Like it or not, it is certainly distinctive.

2002 White Rose Vineyard Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. This wine was been troubled by Brett and has not shown lately like it did on release. The pristine fruit was a fading memory, but the wine still drank decently.

2002 Rex Hill Carabella Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc.. Actually my second favorite of the tasting but not many tasters agreed. This wine had the whole package - five spice nose, silky mouth feel, and a lasting finish of spice-tinged cherries and berries.

2003 Stoller Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. A big wine with a little alcohol evident in the nose and on the finish. A fruit-driven Cali style that some tasters abhorred.

2003 Siduri Muirfield Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc.. A decent 'whitebread' wine that is soft in texture. Simple and fruity rather than complex.

2004 Lemelson Thea's Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc.. I liked this wine, especially the soft texture. Firm and medium structured with full fruit flavors and well integrated oak.

2004 White Rose Vineyard Dragon's Bluff Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 100% whole cluster. Floral and spice perfumed, this is a fruity Beaujolais-style wine that is shallow in the middle and on the finish.

2004 Domaine Serene Coeur Blanc Willamette Valley White Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. This is a fascinating wine which caused many wrinkled brows. It reminds me of a Pinot Blanc with citrus and sour apple flavors. There are some Alsatian features as well.

2004 Penner Ash Seven Springs Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc.. A lighter-styled, feminine wine with a sweet cotton candy nose, and spicy red fruits. A bitter finish mars this otherwise decent Pinot.

2005 Sineann Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. Attractive fruit in the nose and flavors, but the tannins arrive at the finish with a rush.

2005 Soter North Valley Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc.. Like all of Tony Soter's Pinot Noirs, this wine features impeccable balance. The nose is rich, and there is some pure and juicy fruit offered in a light style.

2005 Dukes Family Vineyards Alyssa Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc.. This wine is from R. Gary Andrus of Gypsy Dancer Estates. The nose is flat-out beautiful with hi-tone crushed cherries. The palate is spicy and tenacious with vivid fruit. Nicely weighted. The finish has brisk acidity.

Are Wine Critics Hypertasters?

In the recent issue of the *Wine Enthusiast*, Steve Heimoff penned an article titled, “Hypertasting? No Thanks.” The thrust of the article was whether wine critics who are hypertasters are better tasters, and if so, which critics are hypertasters? No critic has come forth in the press and admitted their genetic predisposition. Hypertasters are also referred to as “supertasters,” a term that should be avoided as it connotes a certain superiority over regular tasters which in fact, is not true.

There are genetically three separate types of tasters in the population: ‘Hypertasters’, who possess two dominate genes, are hypersensitive to basic tastes, and have more taste buds including fungiform papillae on the tip of their tongue; ‘Regular tasters’, who have a moderate response to sensual pleasures and possess one dominate gene and one recessive gene; and ‘Non-tasters’, who are blind to the intensity of many sweet, sour, or salty foods. About 25% of the population are hypertasters, 25% are non-tasters, and 50% are regular tasters. More women and Asians are hypertasters. The taste genes determine how many taste bud receptors a person has for sweetness, sourness, saltiness, and bitterness. The number of taste buds can vary from a few hundred to tens of thousands. The defining tests to determine the class of taster is either count the number of papillae on the tongue (using blue food coloring and Q-tips) or record the sensitivity to 6-n-propylthiouracil or PROP(a tablet used to treat hyperthyroidism - non-tasters will taste nothing when the tablet touches the tip of the tongue, regular tasters will taste a small amount of bitterness, and hypertasters will be quickly repulsed by a strong bitter sensation). Interestingly, every week taste buds wear out and are replaced, but after age 45 they are replaced less frequently, causing more people to become regular or non-tasters.

Hypertasters do not like the strong tastes of many fruits and vegetables and when tasting wine, they would not be expected to like strong tannins and heavy alcohol and would be more sensitive to sweetness. Regular tasters presumably prefer “average” flavors and find sugar more palatable, high alcohol less bitter, and tannins less repulsive. The non-tasters might like sweet wines more and be more forgiving of strong tannins and alcohol.

It is highly unlikely that wine critics will come forward and reveal the type of genetic taster they are. Since 75% of the population are regular tasters or non-tasters, there is a good chance that some critics fall into those two categories. A more likely scenario would be that critics who are hypertasters (who probably would prefer the term supertasters because of the implications) would announce their “superior” genetic heritage. The topic makes for an interesting discussion, and certainly might allow the consumer to align his or her self with a critic with the same genetic tasting category. The reality is, as Steve Heimoff points out, experience is probably more important than heredity in tasting wine. One is not born to taste wine. Ann Noble, wine quality expert at U.C. Davis, said, “None of this is very relevant for wine tasting. People learn to taste (wine); they are not born that way.” The truth is, hypertasters are not better wine tasters, only more sensitive to tannins, alcohol and sweetness. According to a 1997 report in *Wine Business Monthly*, “Researchers privately have joked that hypertasters might even prefer the industrial winemaking process, with its heavy fining and racking procedures which have long been known for stripping out flavonoids and other chemical compounds that make up the unique taste of wines.”

In the end, the only thing that is relevant is the drinker’s seasoned palate and learned preferences. Regardless of genetic predisposition for tasting sensitivity, it is the drinker’s experience, his proclivity, and his love of the grape that dictate his ultimate drinking experience.

I don’t consider myself a wine critic, for I have an aversion to disparaging wines. For what its worth, I am a regular taster, but a hyperlover of Pinot Noir.

Screw Caps Pioneered at Boisset

According to Nielsen Company's annual summary of the retail alcohol beverage market, 2006 sales of screw caps saw a 24.6% growth and accounted for 4% of all 750ml table wine sales. A poll conducted by the *Portland Business Journal* asked consumers, "Is a cork an essential part of the fine wine experience?" 50% of respondents said, "Who cares how the bottle's closed as long as the wine is good," 26% said, "Without a cork, it's just not the same," 12% said, "I've got better things to worry about," and 10% said, "Screw caps are OK for cheap stuff, but I want a cork with the good stuff." Some of the other comments were quite humorous. "Just keep filling my glass with Pinot Noir, OK?" "Screw tops for fine wine is about as acceptable as Dixie cups for a dinner party."

For the first time, a prominent Burgundy wine merchant is going to bottle grand cru Burgundy reds under screw cap. According to a recent press release, Maison Jean-Claude Boisset plans to bottle half of their 50-case production of 2005 Chambertin with a metal screw cap and half with a traditional cork. Both versions of the 2005 Chambertin will be available in France, the UK and the US. Boisset has used screw caps on several of its wines since 2003, including its Santenay Premier Cru Clos Rousseau, Chambolle-Musigny and Gevrey-Chambertin. Whites were offered with screw caps beginning in 2004. Boisset plans to also offer its 2005 Beaune Premier Cru Les Bressandes with both screw cap and cork closure.

The Boisset family has conducted a four-decade cellar test in which they compared the tastes of wines bottled with metal closures and traditional corks. The comparison that sealed the deal, so to speak, for Boisset winemaker Grégory Patriat, was a tasting of 1964 Nuits St. Georges Premier Cru and 1966 Mercurey. The wines sealed with a metal closure tasted fresher, retained more fruit flavors, and were more consistent from bottle to bottle. The wines sealed with cork had more bottle variation. According to Patriat, "The future of great wines lies with screw caps."

Boisset uses the Stelvin Lux+ model which allows a small amount of oxygenation to reach the wine through the seals. The thread is hidden inside the cap, giving the cap a pleasing and elegant appearance. The screw cap closures are more expensive than traditional corks.



The Pinot Czarina

Lane Tanner is a California treasure. Working at Konocti Winery in Lake County on the bottling line in the mid 1970s, her employer found out she had a degree in chemistry and put her in the lab. The first day she was in the lab, she was introduced as the new enologist to the winery's consultant, Andre Tchelistcheff. The only problem was that Lane had no clue what an enologist was. Andre kept telling the winemaker, "Have Lane test this, have Lane test that." Fortunately, Andre liked her spunk and her future career was born. Her experience with Andre has led to her current alias, "Pinot Czarina."

Lane moved on to Firestone Winery in Santa Barbara County and then started her own label, Lane Tanner Winery, in 1984. She was previously married to the owner of the Hitching Post restaurant and made the house wine for that restaurant made famous in the movie *Sideways*.

She now produces about 1,500 cases of Pinot Noir and Syrah at Central Coast Wine Services in Santa Maria. Her style of winemaking is distinctive. She strives for elegance and avoids high and intrusive alcohol at all costs. Oak treatment is understated, with 20-30% new French oak used during a 12-18 month period in barrel. She remains a one-woman show and does everything from start to finish herself. You won't find her wines prominently promoted, but pinotphiles know to buy everything she makes every year. The 2005 lineup is the best since 1986 according to Lane and she calls them the "Yum Yum Lineup."

2005 Lane Tanner Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 556 cases, \$24.50. The back label says, "Dogs, Men, Wine, I Love Them All." A drop of Syrah in this one. Terrific aromatics of toasty spiced cherries. A wine of finesse with tart cherry, pomegranate and oak spice flavors. Very light on its feet and thoroughly satisfying. As Lane says, goes with everything and everyone.

2005 Lane Tanner Bien Nacido Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 264 cases, \$30. The back label says, "When are we going to live, if not now?" Sourced from 30 year old vines in the Bien Nacido Vineyard (almost as old as Lane). This Pinot has a really nice perfume of ripe cherries, cassis and toast. The wine has more backend power than the wine above with a sexy cherry kiss at the end which lasts an eternity. Very nicely composed and balanced. Who says great Pinot Noir can't be made at 13% alcohol? I have seen the Chapel of Love and it is good.

2005 Lane Tanner Julia's Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 375 cases, \$33. This is the richest wine of the lineup but still has lively acid for balance. Decant this wine or wait an hour after pouring a glass or you will be cussing Lane that she sold you a bill of goods! Once it flowers, it offers an attractive nose of plums and currents with a plump mouth feel and a fruit and herbal finish. A little alcohol peaks out on the nose with time. I would drink the above two wines and cellar this busty one for later enjoyment.

Lane Tanner Winery wines are available in Santa Barbara County retail stores and on the winery website at www.lanetanner.com. Join the Pinot Czarina Wine Club for discounts.



Grand Harvest Awards

The 17th Grand Harvest Awards were held February 21-23 in Santa Rosa, California. This judging is sponsored by *Vineyard & Winery Management* magazine and includes entries from primarily the United States and Canada. It is the only North American wine competition that presents entries to judges according to regional classification. Wines of different appellations are arranged in flights and tasted by judges who have specific knowledge of regional characteristics. Wines of specific appellations are tasted and compared with other wines from the same appellation. The wines are judged independent of suggested retail price.

This year there were a record number and percentage of wines receiving Gold Medals. 73 percent of the wines entered won a medal with 10 Double Gold, 186 Gold, 506 Silver, and 465 Bronze. The total number of entries was an all-time high of 1,610.

The Gold Medal winners among Pinot Noirs include the following:

Central Coast

2005 Jekel Vineyards Pinot Noir 15,000 cases, \$15

2005 Hahn Estate Pinot Noir 22,000 cases, \$18

Los Carneros

2004 Mahoney Vineyards Carneros Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$36

2005 Reynolds Family Winery Pinot Noir 800 cases, \$45

Anderson Valley

2004 Claudia Springs Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 300 cases, \$28

Napa Valley

2005 Hagafen Cellars Pinot Noir 1000 cases, \$32

North Coast

2003 Savannah Chanelle Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 367 cases, \$30

Russian River Valley

2005 La Crema Pinot Noir 7900 cases, \$34

2005 Mossbeck Pinot Noir 820 cases, \$25

2004 Rodney Strong Vineyards Reserve Jane's Vineyard Pinot Noir 2251 cases, \$35

San Francisco Bay

2005 Domenico Pinot Noir 126 cases, \$35

Canada

2004 Quail's Gate Okanagan Valley Canada Family Reserve Pinot Noir 2161 x 6 packs, \$40.

Et Fille Wines

The Mozeico family is quietly turning out some of Oregon's finest Pinot Noirs. Father Howard, whose background is in software, has been making Pinot Noir since 1984. Daughter Jessica first assisted in the winemaking with the 2000 vintage and the name Et Fille was born. Et Fille means "and daughter." Howard jokes that "Mozeico et Fille" just wouldn't work.

The goal here is to make small, manageable amounts of distinctive single-vineyard Pinot Noirs in a style that is adapted to the character of each individual vineyard. No attempt is made to craft every vineyard-designate Pinot Noir in the same fashion. Each vineyard gives something unique, and this precious expression of terroir is preserved in the artisan Pinot Noirs made here by father and daughter.



The wines are made at August Cellars, a state-of-the-art gravity flow winery just off Hwy 99W near Newberg, Oregon. A tasting room here offers some of the wines and is open weekends all year, weekdays during the summer. Private tastings are available by appointment (503-449-5030). Sales and marketing are handled by Jessica.

2005 Et Fille Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 140 cases, \$22. Aged 10 months in 10% new French oak. A delightful wine that is not terribly complex, but nicely balanced and beautifully composed. It is a red-fruit driven Pinot with hints of pepper and a gentle touch of oak. Reasonably priced, this wine could be a daily companion at the table.

2005 Et Fille Palmer Creek Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 100 cases, \$32. This 22-acre vineyard is located near Shea Vineyard and planted to Pommard and Wädenswil clones. The wine is aged for 10 months in 50% new French oak. A Pinot of noticeable heft with a deep and complex nose of black cherries, black berries, roses, and vanillin that attracts your attention. The texture is soft and pillowy and the finish of ripe cherries and raspberry tinged with mocha lingers. There is good acid to support the prodigious fruit. A rose and a Baby Ruth.



2005 Et Fille Kalita Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 91 cases, \$32. This 10 acre vineyard was planted in 1999 to Pommard and Dijon clones 113,114,115 and 777. The wine was aged for 10 months in 75% new French oak. The perfume is exotic with spiced cherries, mahogany, and cigar box most evident. The flavors are woody and earthy, with prominent mushroom notes as well as red licorice highlights. At this stage, the aromas trump the flavors, but this filly (sic) hasn't gotten out of the gate yet.

Et Fille Wines are sold through the tasting room and a mailing list. I got mine from www.avalonwine.com. The Palmer Creek Vineyard and Kalita Vineyard Pinot Noirs are sold out at the winery. In the Spring of 2007, two wines will be released: **2005 Et Fille Elton Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** and **2005 Et Fille Maresh Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir**. The phone number is 503-449-5030 and the website is www.etfillewines.com.

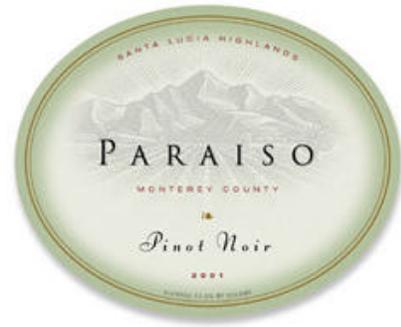
Pinot Noir Celebrations

Santa Barbara County Vintners' Festival

The 25th Annual Vintners' Festival will be celebrated April 20, 21, 22, and 23, 2007. Purchasing a Vintner's Visa entitles the holder to visit 12 of their favorite participating wineries where barrel tastings, special library selections, food and wine pairings, and entertainment will be offered. The Visa is valid from Friday through Monday and costs \$35 per person (\$25 when purchased with the Festival ticket). On Saturday, April 21, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at River Park, just outside of Lompoc, members of the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association will be pouring their wines and local restaurants, catering companies and specialty food purveyors will offer samples of their food. There will be live entertainment and local artists exhibiting. A silent auction featuring large format wines, special bottlings and verticals is part of the festivities. Individual wineries will be sponsoring special dinners all weekend. Tickets are available online at www.sbcountywines.com.

6th Annual Paraiso Vineyard Airshow

For thirty years, the Smiths, owners of Paraiso Vineyards and pioneering Monterey County winegrowers, have enjoyed some of the region's most spectacular vistas from their vineyards' perched high in the Santa Lucia foothills. On May 12, 2007, the public has the opportunity to enjoy Paraiso's elevated, bird's eye view of the Salinas Valley as the Smith family hosts a unique wine tasting, luncheon, and air show. Great wines, fantastic catered gourmet lunch, dance music provided by the Dennis Murphy Jazz Band, and a flying circus, to boot. This is something that you don't see at a winery every day. The air show features the show pilots of Wayne Handley Aeropsorts performing aerial wizardry in a private airshow above the vineyard and over the valley. Tickets are \$100 per person, all-inclusive. Space is limited, and reservations can be made by calling 831-678-0300 or purchasing tickets online at www.ParaisoVineyards.com.



Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Celebration

The Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association host an annual event celebrating the esteemed Pinot Noirs from the Anderson Valley in Mendocino County. Make your plans early for this three day event, as lodging is limited in the Valley. Many attendees choose to stay on the Mendocino Coast and shuttles are provided to and from the events in the Valley. The dates are May 18-20, 2007. On Friday, May 18, there is a Technical Conference at the Fairgrounds in Boonville. The topic is: "Pinot Noir: How to grow it, how to make it, how to taste it, and how to sell it." \$100 per person. On Friday evening, there is a social BBQ at Navarro Vineyards in Philo featuring Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs. \$45 per person. On Saturday, May 19, from 11:00 to 3:00 is the Grand Tasting held at Goldeneye Winery in Philo. More than 30 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir producers will be pouring their wines. \$75 per person. Several winemaker dinners will be held Saturday evening at distinguished restaurants in Mendocino County. \$150 per person. On Sunday, there are special events at host wineries. Information and tickets are available online at www.avwines.com.



3rd Annual Marin County Pinot Noir Celebration

Interest in Marin-grown Pinot Noir continues to increase and this year's event will be the largest ever. The dates are Friday and Saturday, June 8 & 19, 2007. This consumer fund-raiser event benefits the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT). A trade tasting from 3:00 to 5:00 will precede the consumer tasting from 5:00 to 8:00 on both days. The event will be held at the historic Escalle Winery in Larkspur, Marin County, located about 8 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. All of the Marin County growers and vintners will be on hand to pour and discuss their regional wines. There will be a selection of artisan, organic Marin-grown cheeses, breads and other local delicacies. Tickets are \$40. More information and directions for purchasing tickets will be forthcoming (check www.malt.org). The participants who are tentatively scheduled are: Corda Vineyards, Kendric Vineyards, Miller Wine Works, Point Reyes Vineyards, StubbsVineyard, Vergari Wines, Willowbrook Cellars, Dutton-Goldfield, Orogeny Vineyard, Pey-Marin Vineyards, Sean Thackrey, Thomas Fogerty Winery, and Vision Cellars.

Pinot & Paella 2007



On June 10, 2007, the 4th Annual Pinot and Paella Cook-Off will be held at Templeton Community Park in Templeton from 2:00 to 5:00 PM. 12 Paso Robles area Pinot Noir producers will be pouring, and 16 chefs will be cooking paella. All proceeds go to the Paso Robles Youth Arts Foundation. Tickets are \$60 per person, and can be purchased by calling the Paso Robles Youth Arts Foundation at 805-238-5825.

Wine & Fire 2007

The Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance celebrates the vineyards, wines and people of this unique winegrowing region on the weekend of June 22-24, 2007. The event will commence with an evening wine reception in the courtyard of the historic La Purisma Mission in Lompoc, situated on the outskirts of the Sta. Rita Hills Appellation. This will be an evening of fine wines, local entertainment, and fire-grilled foods. Member vintners of the Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance will be on hand to present their latest releases. Saturday will feature a panel of winemakers who will take on some of the controversies of the day in "Trial by Fire," a tasting seminar that will explore four present day issues in a "prove it" trial setting. The issues include 'Oak or no oak in Chardonnay' and 'Made in the cellar or in the vineyard Pinot Noir.' The audience will participate as jurors as the winemakers try to support their positions. A ranchero-inspired gourmet luncheon will feature epicurean delights such as pit-roasted suckling pig, spit-roasted salmon, and grilled local vegetables. The feast and seminar will be held on the grounds of the spectacular Rancho La Vina, on the southwestern edge of the appellation. In addition, a full range of events will be scheduled at wineries including open houses and dinners on Saturday evening on Sunday. These events will be posted as they become available on the event website at www.staritahills.com.



Ticket sales are limited to insure that the event is intimate. The Friday evening Wine Reception is \$75 per person and tickets for Trial By Fire at Rancho La Vina are \$275 per person. A combination ticket for Friday and Saturday is available for \$325. For tickets online, select www.staritahills.com.

