



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir

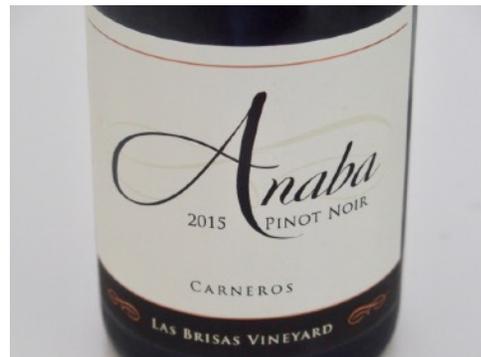
Recent Sips of Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

Anaba Wines, Sonoma, CA

This winery has been kind enough to allow me to sample their offerings for several years and the wines continue to improve since Ross Cobb (COBB Wines and Hirsch Vineyards) and Katy Wilson (LaRue Wines) were brought on as winemakers in late 2014 and put their stamp on the style of the wines. The winery uses fruit from the J McK Estate Vineyard in Carneros as well as other vineyard properties in Northern California. A remodeled tasting room, formerly a farmhouse, is open daily for tasting. Visit www.anabawines.com.

The Carneros AVA was an early pioneering region in the growing and production of Pinot Noir in California. Francis Mahoney, proprietor of Mahoney Vineyards, was an influential contributor to the study of Pinot Noir clones in the Carneros AVA. Las Brisas Vineyard, located on the Sonoma side of Carneros, is part of the Mahoney Estate, and translates to "the breezes." The name comes from the winds that drive morning fog from the vineyards and bring in cooling winds in the late afternoon. The soils are predominantly shallow clay.

2015 Anaba Las Brisas Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.27, TA 0.66, 180 cases, \$48. Harvest Brix 23.6°. Clones 667, 777 and Swan selection. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, fermentation separately by clone. Aged 20 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, fertile earth, mushroom and sawn oak come to the forefront on the nose. Bright and crisp on the palate, virtually dancing on the tongue, with an essence of mid weight cherry flavor goodness. There are some forestry spices in the background that add interest. Very charming, with exquisite balance and a finish awash in juicy cherry.* **93.**



Anam Cara Cellars, Dundee, OR

Owners Nick and Sheila Nicholas continue to produce consistently stellar Pinot Noir from the Nicholas Vineyard planted in 2001. Tasting is available at the winery's tasting room in downtown Newberg. Visit www.anamcaracellars.com.

2016 Anam Cara Nicholas Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 335 cases, \$39. 37% field blend of Pommard, 115 and 114, 37% 114, 22% 115, and 4% Wädenswil. Aged in French oak barrels, 15% new, 25% once-filled. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, ripe cranberry, underbrush, BBQ rub and sawn oak. Light to mid weight in style, offering flavors of black cherry and dark red berries. Straightforward and simple, with a silky mouthfeel and modest finish.* **89.**

2016 Anam Cara Nicholas Vineyard Reserve Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 150 cases, \$53. Sourced from reserve rows that yield no more than 1.5 tons per acre. A barrel selection. Wädenswil, 16% 115, 16% 114 and 18% field blend of Pommard, 115 and 114. Aged in French oak barrels, 22% new, 22% once-filled. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Glorious aromas of black cherry,*

blackberry, spice and earthy flora. Very pleasing in the mouth, displaying black cherry, black raspberry and cassis flavors with a deft touch of oak. Silky and well-balanced, with mid weight plus concentration, finishing with some purpose. **91.**

2016 Anam Cara Mark X Nicholas Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$75. A blend from Reserve rows and barrels that is boldly crafted. 90% field blend of Pommard, 115 and 114, 10% Wädenswil. Aged in French oak barrels, 30% new, 30% once-filled. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of black fruits lead off. Bold, rich and full-bodied, yet possessing good energy and spirit. The core of blackberry and black current fruits are blessed with commendable oak integration. The tannins are reigned in, the texture is velvety and the finish is noticeably lengthy. Considerably more open and giving when tasted the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Best to decant first for current drinking.* **93.**



Burt Street Cellars, Sonoma, CA

Partners Joshua Haberman, Timothy Skok and Jonathen Tyer started making wine on Burt Street in Santa Rosa, CA. All three work in the wine and spirits industry and are passionate about wine. The wines are produced at a bonded facility in Sonoma Valley. Visit www.burtstreetcellars.com.

2016 Burt Street Cellars Stony Point Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 150 cases, \$45. East-facing, hilltop vineyard situated above the fog line. Soils are Goldridge loam and adobe clay. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas and flavors veer to the ripe side in this middleweight wine. The nose offers scents of black cherry, blackberry, prune and terra-cotta. Luscious flavors of black cherry, blueberry, blackberry and spice fill the mouth. Flashy and bombastic, with integrated tannins, juicy acidity and some finishing length. A bit of heat shows up on the conclusion.* **88.**

2016 Burt Street Cellars Roma's Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 150 cases, \$45. Vineyard is located on a ridge 1,800 feet elevation above the fog line. Soil is Goldridge loam. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, dried herbs and cigar box. Savory and fruit flavors mingle in this mid weight offering with tastes of cherry, red berry and green herbs. Juicy, with modest tannins, a compliment of oak in the background, and some aromatic fruit on the finish.* **88.**

Byron Wines, Santa Maria, CA

Veteran winemaker Jonathan Nagy focuses on small production, single vineyard Pinot Noir and Chardonnay using grapes from the Santa Maria Valley estate 118-acre Nielsen Vineyard and estate Julia's Vineyard. Grapes are also sourced from Bien Nacido Vineyard. A companion label, Nielson, focuses on appellation blends. A tasting room is located in Los Olivos. The winery is part of the Jackson Family Wines portfolio. Visit www.nielsonwines.com.

2015 Byron La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., \$55. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, underbrush, woodland spice and cigar lead to well-spiced flavors of black cherry and boysenberry. Sleek in the mouth with balanced tannins and a modest but satisfying finish. There is a bit too much oak barrel intrusion, but otherwise this is a delightful wine.* **91.**

2015 Byron Julia's Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$45. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Heady aromas of purple berries and supportive oak. Silken in the mouth, featuring a discreetly concentrated core of cherry fruit and spice. This wine also leans on oak. Easy drinking with gentle tannins and an adequate finish.* **90.**

2015 Byron Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$55. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A deep well of blackberry fruit aromas gain traction over time in the glass. Velvety and*

luxurious on the palate, with a luscious array of dark fruit flavors including boysenberry and blackberry. A well-mannered oak compliment adds to the satisfaction as does the finish that is both ostentatious and lengthy. 93.

KORi Wines, Gonzales, CA

A partnership between Santa Lucia Highlands grower Kirk Williams and his stepdaughter Kori Violini. Very good values in quality Pinot Noir. Visit www.koriwines.com.



2013 KORi KW Ranch Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 150 cases, \$30. 14-acre vineyard farmed by grower Kirk Williams. Pommard and 667 clones. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lovely perfume of Bing cherry, baking spice and toasty oak. A light to mid weight wine that is cheerful and vibrant with a core of tasty dark cherry. There is a little more oak overlay than I prefer but it is not egregious. 90.*



2014 KORi KW Ranch Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 150 cases, \$38. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. An array of dark fruit aromas arrive slowly over time in the glass. The mid weight plus flavors of black cherry and blackberry are satisfying. More sap and tannin than the 2013 bottling, and better oak management. 91.*

Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Healdsburg, CA

I have had consistently high praises for the wines crafted at Garry Farrell. The winery has sourced newer vineyards of late and two of them, Martaella and McDonald Mountain, are featured here. Winemaker Theresa Heredia has carried on the legacy of Gary Farrell admirably, staying true to his acid-driven style but tweaking it a bit to put her own stamp on the wines. The winery has a stylish tasting room open by appointment. Visit www.garyfarrell.com.



2015 Gary Farrell Martaella Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.68, 342 cases, \$65. 42-acre high-density plantings including 9 different clones and heirloom selections. 85% of fruit de-stemmed, 15% added as whole cluster. 6-day cold soak, 10-15 day extended maceration post fermentation. Aged 16 months on primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Enticing and giving aromas of cherry, blueberry and spice engage the senses. The dreamy, satiny mouthfeel immediately grabs your attention. A full-bodied stream of black cherry and blueberry sap retains a pleasing succulence due to underlying bright acidity. This special wine aims to please from the get-go. Still stellar when tasted from a previously opened bottle the following day. 95.*



2015 Gary Farrell McDonald Mountain Vineyard Clone 667 20% Whole Cluster Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.23, TA 0.76, 90 cases, \$70. Black label indicating this is a special winemaker bottling. Vineyard is located in the cool Sebastopol Hills and was planted in 2008 in Goldridge soil. Two adjacent blocks of 667 produce seductive wines and the winemaker could not bring herself to blend it away. 80% de-stemmed, 20% whole cluster. 5-day cold soak, 10-15 day extended post-fermentation maceration. Aged 16 months on primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. This wine must be decanted for full enjoyment as it is very shy and monolithic upon opening. My remarks refer to tasting the wine 8 hours after opening. The nose is quite exotic and seductive, offering aromas of crushed blackberries, cassis, dried herbs and sweet oak. Well-endowed with a core of black cherry, black raspberry, and cardamom spice backed by ripe tannins. The lively acidity drives a juicy, succulent experience. The finish offers an echo of dark fruits that are both aromatically engaging and persistent. 94.*



2016 Gary Farrell Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.44, TA 0.67, 598 cases, \$80. This bottling includes three blocks planted in 1974, 1995 and 2000, where some of the vines come from cuttings taken from the original “mother” block planted in 1968. Grapes harvested in early morning, 80% gently de-stemmed into open-top tanks. 20% of the hand-selected bunches were added to the top of the tank as whole clusters and the fruit underwent a 5-7 day cold soak before fermentation started. After fermentation, the newly fermented wine underwent a 10-15 day extended maceration. Aged 15 months on the primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Pleasing scents of cherry, applewood, earthy flora and a hint of oak. A “light and bright” styled wine featuring a core of juicy red cherry fruit wrapped in fine grain tannins. Excellent harmony, with impressive length and grip on the spiced cherry finish.* **93.**

Kessler-Haak Vineyard & Wines, Santa Barbara, CA

The winery's estate vineyard is located on Hwy 246, 11 miles west of Buellton. Owners Dan Kessler and Ellen Haak-Kessler acquired the 40-acre site and planted a 30-acre vineyard in 2005. The vineyard has 7 Pinot Noir clones on 3 rootstocks over 27 acres. A 2.5-acre hillside was reserved for 3 clones of Chardonnay planted on low vigor 110R rootstock. Yields in the vineyard average 1.2-1.5 tons per acre for Pinot Noir. Vineyard practices are strictly organic. The website is www.kesslerhaakwine.com.

2014 Kessler-Haak Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 12.6% alc., 120 cases, \$N/A. Clone 2A. Aged 10 months in neutral French and Hungarian oak barrels. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of fertile earth and cigar initially. Dark fruit aromas showed up when the wine was tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. More fruit-driven on the palate, featuring mid weight flavors of black raspberry, boysenberry and blackberry, yet with noticeable woody overlay. The tannins are well integrated and the finish is very modest.* **87.**

2014 Kessler-Haak Estate Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 360 cases, \$N/A. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of dark fruits and oak barrel in harmony. Fruit-driven in a mid weight style, showing fruit flavors of black cherry and blackberry. Rather seamless, with an easygoing character and a modest finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the nose expressed more black cherry and spice goodness.* **90.**

2014 Kessler-Haak Reserve Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 100 cases, \$N/A. Clones 115 and 777. Aged 10 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 25% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of dark fruits and cigar. Serious purple berry sap is underlain with noticeable oak compliments. The fine grain tannins are well integrated and the overall impression is agreeable. The finish shows some length appropriate for a reserve bottling.* **91.**

2015 Kessler-Haak Ohana Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 635 cases, \$N/A. Clones 115, 777, 667, 114 and 2A. Aged 10 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 18% new. “Ohana” is Hawaiian for family. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of cherry and underbrush. Streamlined and easy to like in the mouth, with a mid weight core of black cherry fruit framed by modest tannins. Not particularly complex, but my notes include “enjoyable,” “giving,” and “agreeable.” The oak is deftly managed in this wine.* **92.**



Open Claim Vineyards, Gaston, OR

This is a new entry in the ever-expanding cadre of growers who begin producing their own wines. Marnie and Brett Wall are the winery owners, and Tony Rynders is the winemaker. The owner's 55-acre site has been in Marnie's family for over 20 years. The 12-acre estate vineyard, planted in 2012, is located southwest of the

Eola-Amity Hills in the newly proposed Mt. Pisgah AVA. The vineyard is dry-farmed with the use of organic practices. Several wineries have sourced grapes from this vineyard including Broadley, WildAire, Dobbles Family Estate and Joel Gott Wines.

The co-owners are opening a small, by appointment tasting room featuring chef-inspired pairings in the fall of 2019. Visit www.openclaimvineyards.com. The 2015 Chardonnay was reviewed in the previous issue.

2015 Open Claim Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 57 cases, \$75, DIAM closure. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. The nose offers primarily oak-driven aromas of vanilla, toast and tobacco with fruit aromas of darkest cherry and blackberry in the background. The deep well of fruit includes vivacious flavors of black raspberry and blackberry, along with accents of spice and earth. The sumptuous new oak tends to dominate rather than ingratiate the gorgeous fruit. The noble tannins contribute nicely to the soothing, creamy texture. The extended finish highlights aromatic fruit glory. I tasted the wine several hours later from a previously opened bottle, and the oak intrusion persisted. I wanted a little more zip and zing, but this is a commendable wine, especially for those who relish oak accentuation in their Pinot. 90.*

RAEN Winery, Sonoma, CA

A partnership between Carlo Mondavi and Dante Mondavi. The winery name translates as “Society of Research in Agriculture & Enology Naturally.” The winery’s three hillside vineyard estates are located within miles of the Pacific Ocean. All 2016 bottlings are sold out. Wines are allocated to RAEN Society members and Mailing List members. I have been a fan of these wines, now in their fourth release. In addition to the wine reviewed here, the 2016 lineup includes a Fort Ross-Seaview Home Filed Vineyard and a Freestone Occidental Bodega Vineyard Pinot Noir, and a Fort Ross-Seaview Charles Ranch Vineyard Chardonnay. The website is www.raenwinery.com. Visits by appointment.

The 4.8-acre Home Filed Vineyard is located two miles from the Pacific Ocean at 1,400 feet elevation. The 10-acre Bodega Vineyard is four miles from the Pacific Ocean and is just behind Bodega Bay. This is a planting of some of the oldest meter-by-meter hillside vines on the Sonoma Coast.

All Pinot Noirs in 2016 were vinified with natural fermentation, 80%-100% whole cluster and aged in 10% new and 90% neutral French oak barrels.

2016 RAEN Royal St. Robert Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc, \$65. The most widely available bottling from this vintage and available in multiple retail outlets nationally. Dedicated to the owner’s grandfather, Robert Mondavi. Sourced from just behind Bodega Bay and consists of special lots that are the best in the cellar. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Pleasingly aromatic, with scents of dark cherry, exotic spice, fertile earth and rose petal. The nose becomes more attractive over time in the glass. Mid weight plus in style, offering flavors of dark cherry, dark cranberry, spice, burnt tobacco and an earthy tone. Sleek in texture, with modest tannins, juicy acidity and some persistence on the finish. This wine is nicely composed and forward drinking. 93.*



Sangiacomo Wines, Sonoma, CA

The third generation of the Sangiacomo family has released its first estate wines from estate vineyards in Carneros, Napa and the Sonoma Coast with the 2017 vintage. Vittorio and Maria Sangiacomo staked the family’s flag in Sonoma with the purchase of the Home Ranch, a 52-acre fruit tree ranch, in 1927. The family’s next generation of Angelo, Buck, Lorraine and Bob Sangiacomo carried on the legacy by growing the apple and pear business and converting to premium wine grape growing in the late 1960s. Except for Bob, who passed away in 2006, the second generation continues to be involved daily in all aspects of the business. The third generation, Mike, Steve and Mia, grew up on the Home Ranch and today, along with their spouses, work to ensure high levels of quality in the family legacy. The family is pictured below:

The Sangiacomo holdings have grown to 1,600 estate acres of vines in Napa and Sonoma counties. All vineyards are 100% certified sustainable. Perhaps the most well-known Pinot Noir vineyard is Roberts Road located in the Sonoma Coast.

The winemaker is veteran James MacPhail, formerly of MacPhail Wines.

Visit www.sangiacomowines.com.



2016 Sangiacomo Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.61, 215 cases, \$60. Released May 2018. 40% Roberts Road, 40% Fedrick, and 20% Amaral vineyards. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Swan selection. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak with hand punch downs. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of boysenberry, spice, floral cologne and toasty oak. Soft and smooth in the mouth, with an intense mid palate presence of purple and black berry fruits. A hint of oak-driven spice and toast ply the background. The well-integrated tannins and juicy acidity compliment the wine. 90.*

2016 Sangiacomo Roberts Road Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.59, 64 cases, \$70. Released May 2018. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, hand punch downs, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry reduction and toasty oak lead off. Discreetly concentrated in a mid weight style, featuring flavors of purple berry, blackberry, pomegranate and spice flavors. Very suave on the palate with cashmere tannins and some finishing purpose. There is some alcohol warmth on the finish. A bit of oak characters persist even when tasted the follow day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 91.*

2016 Sangiacomo Vi Maria Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.57, 81 cases, \$80. Release September 2018. 50% Amaral, 25% Roberts Road and 25% Fedrick vineyards. Clones 667, 777, Pommard and Swan selection. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, daily punch downs by hand, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Invigorating aromas of black cherry, cardamom spice, fertile earth and a hint of toast and graham are revealed slowly in the glass. Rather bold in a mid weight plus style, but stealthy, with an abundance of boysenberry, blackberry and black grape flavors. There is a bit of umami in this wine. Sleek tannins lead to a satiny texture and the oak blends seamlessly over time in the glass. More enchanting when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 93.*

2016 Sangiacomo Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.60, 87 cases, \$55. Released May 2018. Sourced from Green Acres and Home Ranch vineyards. 50% Hyde and 50% Wente clones. Barrel fermented. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, with lees stirring every two weeks. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Boisterous aromas of buttery lemon, pineapple, toasted brioche and vanilla creme. Oily and polished in the mouth, with flavors of pineapple, banana, and festive oak. A ripely fruited style that is rich on the palate, yet possessing enough acidity to avoid heaviness. There is the slightest alcohol warmth on the finish.* **90.**

2016 Sangiacomo Green Acres Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.58, 79 cases, \$65. 50% Hyde and 50% Wente clones. Barrel fermented and aged with lees stirring every two weeks. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, with lees stirring every two weeks. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Captivating aromas of lemon, pineapple, yellow apple, pineapple, kiwi, vanilla creme and nutty oak. More refined and vibrant than the Sonoma Coast bottling, with more uplifting fruit flavors of citrus and baked pear. Creamy and seductive on the palate with deft oak support. My only nit is that there is slight alcohol-driven warmth in this wine.* **92.**

2016 Sangiacomo Home Ranch Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.59, 78 cases, \$65. Released May 2018. 100% Wente clone. Barrel fermented and aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, with lees stirring every two weeks. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Seductive aromas of citrus peel and sea breeze captivate. Noticeable energy and vibrancy, offering bright flavors of citrus, apple, butterscotch and the briny hint of the sea. The mouthfeel is supple and cleansing rather than oily. Sophisticated and pleasing in every way, except there is a hint of alcoholic warmth.* **93.**



Sweetzer Cellars, Buellton, CA

The winery owners were inspired to enter the wine business by a summer trip to France in 2008. They began crafting wine in an apartment on Sweetzer Ave. in West Hollywood, California, using Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from Napa and Sonoma. In 2011, they tried their hand at Pinot Noir. The wines are now produced at a bonded facility in Buellton. About 1,000 cases are made of single vineyard and appellation-designated Pinot Noir, as well as single vineyard and appellation-designated Chardonnay, Syrah and Grenache. Tasting by appointment. Visit www.sweetzer-cellars.myshopify.com.

2014 Sweetzer Cellars Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 529 cases, pH 3.59, TA 0.59, \$35. Sourced from Presqu'ile, La Encantada, and Rita's Crown vineyards. Clones 115, 667, 777, and "828." 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native and RC212 fermentation, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Red cherry and berry aromas and flavors are featured in this lighter weighted wine that is simple and forward. Oak vanillin shows up as a backdrop. Easy going tannins emerge with some astringency on the finish.* **87.**

2014 Sweetzer Cellars La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 147 cases, pH 3.55, TA 0.58, \$45. Clones 667 and 777. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native and RC212 fermentation, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas of black cherry, exotic spices and rose petal are highly satisfying. The gorgeous, well-spiced dark cherry fruit excites the senses on entree. Nicely composed, with balanced tannins and acidity, and a modest, but pleasing finish.* **90.**

2014 Sweetzer Cellars Rita's Crown Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 148 cases, pH 3.62, TA 0.61, \$60. Clones 667 and "828." 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, native and RC212 fermentation, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of black cherry, fertile earth and toasty oak lead to a middleweight wine boasting a delicious core of cherry and strawberry fruit. Silky in the mouth, with gentle tannins and a seriously long finish. There is a little more oak interplay than I like, but the fruit is so luscious, that is easy to overlook.* **92.**



2014 Sweetzer Cellars Presqu'ile Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 147 cases, pH 3.64, TA 0.55, \$45. Clones 115, 667 and 777. 100% de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak, native and RC212 fermentation, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh black cherry and spice. Flavors of black cherry and black raspberry are framed by compatible tannins in a mid weight style. Rather simple, with too much oak input, still evident when the wine was re-tasted several hours later from a previously opened bottle.* **89.**

More Wine

2016 Laurelwood Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 2,000 cases, \$11.99. Produced and bottled by Laurelwood Winery, Silverton, OR. Sold at Trader Joe's. 100% de-stemmed, whole berry fermented in 1.5-ton open-top bins. Aged in neutral French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and heavily toasted oak lead off. Flavors of oak-infused cherry, strawberry and red current. The taste of burnt wood pervades the wine even though neutral oak was used in its production. Approachable now, with some length in the mouth and finish. A decent wine at this price point.* **86.**

Pinot Briefs

Duckhorn Wine Company Acquires Kosta Browne Duckhorn Wine Company, which recently acquired Calera Wine Company, has now purchased Kosta Browne. Founded in 1997, Kosta Browne rose to prominence in the mid-2000's and has been a sought-after Pinot Noir brand ever since. The sale includes the company, the winery, all assets and inventory, as well as 170 acres of vineyards through ownership or long-term leases that include Cerise Vineyard in the Anderson Valley, sections of Keefer Ranch Vineyard in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley and Gap's Crown Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast. Duckhorn Wine Company will still focus on small production for Kosta Browne. That said, they will be emphasizing the wholesale market more than in the past (85% of production has been sold to a mailing list), so the wines will be more available in high-end restaurants and wine shops across the country for consumers. The Kosta Browne team will remain with the winery, including CEO Scott Becker and winemaker Nico Cueva. The acquisition of Kosta Browne will not include CIRQ, which was founded, and continues to be owned, by Michael Browne. The Kosta Browne Hospitality Center in The Barlow in Sebastopol is pictured below. Tasting is available by appointment to the mailing list and waiting list members.



Sta. Rita Hills Wine & Fire Weekend A reminder that on the weekend of August 17, 18, and 19, three events will be held as part of the Wine & Fire Weekend: Friday Night Barn Party, Speed Tasting and Lunch with a Winemaker on Saturday, and Wine & Fire Grand Tasting at La Purisima Mission on Saturday evening. Early bird tickets expire July 29. For tickets, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wine-and-fire-in-the-sta-rita-hills-wine-country-2018-tickets-46013953975>.

No Reason to Store Wine On Its Side Says Scientist Dr. Miguel Cabral, Amorim's Director of Research and Development recently said that storing wine on its side won't prevent corks from drying out, and may even accelerate the weakening of the cork's cell structure. He noted, "The cork will never dry out with almost 100% humidity in the headspace, so it is a myth that you need to store a bottle on its side." Apparently, he feels that the cork is only influenced by the humidity inside the bottle, not by the environment around the bottle.

Pinot Noir Adores Oak but It is a Contentious Relationship Sometime back, I read an article online in *The Press Democrat* by Dan Berger titled, “Red Wines Lean Heavily on Oak for Top-Scoring Flavors,” <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/lifestyle/8019585-181/berger-on-wine-red-wines?sba=AAS>. He pointed out that aromas described as vanilla bean, cedar, bacon, chocolate, pipe tobacco, mocha and toast were not grape aromatics but found in wines relying on heavily toasted oak barrels. Berger said, “A cynic might say that such wines are as much a product of trees as they are of grapevines.” He goes on to point out that some wine reviewers are so smitten with oak that they lavish praise on wines that have almost no grape or wine aromas. The only reason I point out this article is that I am in complete agreement with Berger’s remarks. Unlike many wine critics who try to skirt around the term “oak” in their reviews by using its consequent aroma and flavor tags such as chocolate, tobacco and toast, I do use oak to make it clear where these characters in wine are coming from. For me, the biggest drawback to the current offerings of domestic Pinot Noir is a whack of oak on the nose and palate. You will find that I downgrade wines that lean heavily on oak for their character.

Oak characters include: oak, cedar, sandalwood, redwood, pine needles, pine pitch, resin, tree bark, sawdust, sap, tar, smoke, sweet smoke, ash, creosote, woody, old box, cigar box, espresso, mocha, chocolate, toast, char, tobacco, mown hay, grass, clove, cinnamon, coconut, vanilla, brown sugar, bourbon, maple syrup, burnt sugar, butterscotch, caramel, molasses, toffee, soy, creme soda, marshmallow, nuts, brioche, toasted bread, barbecue, grilled meats, bacon, nutmeg, and anise.



Union Wine Co. Now Oregon’s Largest Producer According to an article online from *Wines & Vines*, <https://www.winesandvines.com/news/article/201224/Oregon-Wineries-Step-Up-Outside-Players-Move-In>, Union Wine Co. projects that it will produce 391,000 cases in 2018. A large part of this winery’s growth has come from canned wine, amounting to 244,000 cases in 2018, up 94% from last year.