



PinotFile

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

DION Vineyard: Exceptional Pinot Noir in 2016

DION Vineyard consists of 60 acres of Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay located in the northern end of the Chehalem Mountains appellation of the Willamette Valley. The vineyard has been farmed by three generations and some of the Pinot Noir vines, rooted in Laurelwood soil, are 40 years old (Old Vine Block). A majority of the vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir and includes the clones of Pommard, 115, 114, 113, 667 and 777 of varying ages and rootstocks.

Today, husband and wife winemakers Kevin Dion Johnson and Beth Klinger operate the vineyard, supplying grapes to wineries throughout Oregon, and producing about 1,000 cases of wine under the DION Vineyard label. Photo credits to Paul Cunningham.



The 2016 harvest may have been one of the most unique in this winery's history according to Kevin because it was the earliest harvest ever and the only time picking occurred in August. Harvest began August 31 under

very hot conditions and continued over the next 17 days into September. Kevin told me, “This early start presented us with a lovely spectrum of fruit. Sugars and acidity were similar to a cool year at the beginning, transitioning to a warm year style as very warm days at harvest powered the fruit from cool to warm. The result was wonderful acidity and lower alcohols like a cool year to pair up with the powerful fruit notes of a warmer vintage. This combination is rare.”

Kevin noted, “This unique harvest was also made possible by a very early and warm spring which triggered the start of bloom in late May, a solid week earlier than the very warm 2015 vintage and two weeks earlier than average and a full month before the latest ever harvest in 2011. That early heat then gave way to a very modest summer that was relatively cool compared to the 2014 and 2015 growing seasons. Summer came roaring back with triple digit temperatures in the latter part of August. That early bloom and cool early summer led to fruit that had full flavor and color development by the end of August while still retaining the sugars and acidities of a cooler vintage.”

Beth remarked that 2016 was potentially her favorite vintage ever because “the acids are distinct, ferments were beautiful, and we were able to do half of the ferments spontaneously.” Closures were changed for the 2016 vintage, with the Chehalem Mountains Pinot Noir bottled under screw cap and the Reserve and Old Vines closed using DIAM corks. This was done to avoid bottle variation and improve overall consistent quality of the wines.

The three 2016 Pinot Noir wines reviewed here were truly exceptional and reflect the fact that the 2016 vintage in Oregon was special for many wineries. I personally prefer the 2016 Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs over every vintage since 2012. The Old Vines Special Release may well be the best Oregon Pinot Noir I tasted in 2018.

The wines of DION Vineyard are available for tasting at the winery’s tasting room in Cornelius, Oregon, Friday-Sunday from April to November or by appointment. The website is www.dionvineyard.com. Contact the winery directly to purchase these wines that represent outstanding value. Some older vintage Pinot Noir wines are available as well.



2016 DION Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 342 cases, \$30. Released April 2018. Clones 115, 114, 667, 777 and Pommard. Harvest Brix 22.4°-25.1°. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas gain traction over time in the glass, revealing cherry, cola, spice and dried herbs. Light in weight in an easygoing and highly enjoyable style with a core of juicy red cherry, red berry and blueberry fruit flavors. A hint of savory herbs adds interest. Nicely balanced with some finishing generosity. This wine packs a lot of flavor despite being light in color and weight. 90.*

2016 DION Winemaker’s Reserve Special Release Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 139 cases, \$45. Release November 2018. A barrel selection from the best blocks and wines that are most expressive of the vintage anchored by clone 115. Harvest Brix 22.4°-25.1°. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasing aromas of black cherry and rose petal. A very harmonious wine with great verve, very fine grain tannins, and a satisfying finish with honorable length. Middleweight in style, with vivid flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and purple berry with a hint of white pepper. A very stylish Pinot lover’s wine. 93.*



2016 DION Old Vines Special Release Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., 99 cases, \$60. Release April 2019. 100% self-rooted, non-irrigated Pommard clone from a 10-acre block planted in 1976. Harvest Brix 25.1°. Aged in French oak barrels, 50% new. *This is one of those wines that elicits emotion from the first sip. Gorgeous perfume of spiced cherries and blueberry-pomegranate fruits. Vigorous with black cherry flavor that is long and expansive in the mouth accompanied by impeccable harmony. Flavor packed, yet elegant, with supportive fine-grain tannins, integrated oak, juicy acidity and a ridiculously long finish. It is wines like this that have me proclaiming that Pommard is my paramour. A flat-out beautiful wine! 96.*



Soliste: Frenchy's Passion for Pinot Noir Shines Through in the 2014 Wines

I had the opportunity to taste the 2014 Soliste Monoclone® Sonoma Coast Pinot Noirs three times, twice at home using my usual tasting regimen and once over lunch with winemaker Claude "Frenchy" Koeberle (a native of Burgundy). Claude is the only person I know who loves Pinot Noir more than me!

In 2005, Claude Koeberle and Don Plumley made their first Pinot Noir from a family vineyard that is located in a unique Sonoma Coast site that they believed would allow them to craft wines with a style that might satisfy their infatuation of the great Burgundies. In 2009, from the same site, they challenged themselves to make Pinot Noirs from a single vineyard, a single clone and using a single cooperage from France to deliver an uncompromisable focus to each wine. The impetus was a return to the roots of Burgundy and the craftsmanship of the Cistercian monks of Vougeot. The name Monoclone® was born and registered as a trademark. Using a single clone from a single vineyard and raising the wine in a single cooperage is unique among California producers of Pinot Noir. As Claude would say, "Vive la difference!"



Read the full story on Soliste, the *PinotFile* 2013 Winery of the Year, at www.princeofpinot.com/article/1461/.

The 2014 vintage began with a moderate winter and an earlier start. A cool spring led to a good fruit set. A temperate, gentle growing season ensued so it was possible to nurture complexity and concentration along with quality in the vineyards. Although California's persistent drought was concerning in parts of the state, the cool, coastal sites used in Soliste wines remained unaffected with some vineyards dry farmed.

The reviewed wines represent the winery's September 2018 release. Even at four years after harvest, these are young wines and benefit from decanting if opened now. Production is very limited by choice and the wines

are sold exclusively through an allocated mailing list. The single barrel releases are for loyal supporters of the winery and in some cases, are restaurant only releases. The winery also offers superb Lake County Sauvignon Blanc (St. Andelain, a tribute to Didier Dagueneau). Soliste wines are available at many restaurant partners in California, Las Vegas, Chicago, New York and Washington D.C.. Private tastings can be arranged by appointment at the Santa Rosa production facility. Visit the winery's website at www.soliste.com.

All the following wines were meticulously crafted. Grapes were hand-harvested at midnight from September 6 to September 18. Multiple, often four, passes were done on different days to capture different levels of grape maturation. Only manual punchdowns were used.

2014 Soliste Nouveau Monde Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.6% alc., 97 cases, \$85. Pommard Monoclonal®. 33% whole cluster. Aged 18 months in Siruge French oak barrels, 0% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The evocative nose offers aromas of dark red cherry, purple berry, rose petal, tobacco and earthy flora. Soft, smooth and stylish in the mouth with noticeable delicacy and refinement. The most savory and lightest wine in the 2014 lineup, with a bit of mushroom framing the dark red and purple fruits. There is also a carbonic quality to the fruit profile. The wine finishes fragrant and reasonably long. 92.*



2014 Soliste L'Ambroisie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

13.6% alc., 73 cases, \$100. "828" Monoclonal®. 43% whole cluster. Aged 18 months in Remond French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas of dark cherry, black raspberry sous bois, spice and pipe tobacco soar from the glass over time. Charming on the palate with a mid weight plus core of richly flavored dark cherry and black raspberry fruits framed with a touch of oak spice and tobacco. Envious vibrancy, with fine tannins, a silken mouthfeel, and a very persistent finish redolent in sweet cherry fruit. This is the most boisterous wine in the 2014 lineup, yet one that dances graciously in the mouth from attack to finish. The acid and tannin are compatible backbone companions predicting age ability. 95.*



2014 Soliste L'Espérance Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 147 cases, \$85. 115 Monoclonal®. 0% whole cluster. Aged 18 months in Rousseau French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Alluring scent of pie cherry, raspberry, blueberry-pomegranate and spice. Discreetly concentrated core of black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors along with notes of tar, exotic spice and earthiness. Exquisitely balanced with a silk and satin texture, integrated mildly firm tannins and adept oak treatment. The fruit really sings on the finish. 93.*

Single Barrel Wines (wax-sealed, heavy bottles)

2014 Soliste L'Ermite Rouge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.4% alc. 27 cases, \$100. Sourced from a monastic vineyard located off a winding road through redwoods. Claude calls it a "Hermitage of Peace." 23 Monoclonal®. 50% whole cluster. Aged 28 months in a used cigar shaped oak barrel from France. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant but shy aromas of darker stone and berry fruits, along with scents of fertile earth and mulch. A richly fruited wine in a mid weight plus style, with dark black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors framed by modestly firm tannins that carry over on the gloriously long and intensely fruity finish. The gorgeous fruit was more expressive when the wine was re-tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. This wine could use a little more time in the cellar but is hard to resist now. 93.*

2014 Soliste Ulysses Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir "828" Monoclonal® from Van Der Camp Vineyard. 0% whole cluster. Aged 28 months in one new French oak barrel. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. A savory nose offers aromas of red cherry and dried herbs. Light to mid weight in concentration, with flavors echoing the aromas. A bit shallow on the mid palate and finish, and soft in texture due to shy acidity. No change was evident over time after decanting. 89.*



2014 Soliste Grand Charmes Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 57 cases, 777 Monoclonal®. Sonatera Vineyard. 50% whole cluster. Aged 28 months in a single new French oak barrel. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very lovable wine with a seductive perfume of cherry, exotic spices and burnt tobacco. Elegant and silky, with a mid weight core of expansive cherry and raspberry fruits picking up depth over time in the glass. A dollop of oak and spice add satisfaction.*

The tannins provide supportive structure and the bright acidity contributes verve. Nicely composed, with an enduring finish. The wine rises to another level over time. 94.

2014 Soliste L'Eternel Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 777 Monoclone®. 50% whole cluster. Aged 28 months in one new French oak barrel. Not reviewed.



2014 Soliste Contrebande Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.8% alc., 23 cases. 115 Monoclone®. 25% whole cluster. Aged 28 months in one new French oak barrel. *Gorgeous robe of moderate garnet in the glass. Enthralling perfume of black cherry and raspberry fruits accompanied by hints of spice and undergrowth. A lip-smacking wine with pristine balance, offering mid weight flavors of black cherry, purple berry, nutty oak and exotic spice. Everything you could ask for, including fine-grain tannins, exemplary acidity, and a vigorous finish that seems relentless. A killer wine with harmony that really stands out. 94.*

2013 Soliste L'Age D'Or Russian River Valley Chardonnay 12.9% alc., \$50. Aged 16 months in 600L thick-stave French oak barrels. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Delicate aromas of lemon confit, white flower blossom, pineapple, pear and spice. Palate pleasing flavors of citrus fruits with a hint of oak-driven vanilla and nuts. Slightly viscous in texture, with integrated acidity. A gracious wine of enviable restraint offered in a Chablis style. Ideal for delicately seasoned or sauced seafood. 93.*

Dutton-Goldfield 2016 Pinot Noir: Whoa Nelly!

I recently sampled ten Dutton-Goldfield Pinot Noir wines from the 2016 vintage and was awed that every single wine in the lineup was superb.. Year in and year out, the team of winemaker Dan Goldfield and winegrower Steve Dutton produces wines of consistent excellence so this tasting was no surprise. As a group, this lineup of Pinot Noirs was the best I have ever tasted from Dutton-Goldfield.

Steve Dutton is a fifth-generation farmer whose father Warren Dutton pioneered the growing of grapes in the western reaches of the Russian River Valley in the mid-1960s. Steve joined the Dutton Ranch team full-time in 1987 and now manages the family business that has grown to over 80 vineyards comprising more than 1,000 acres throughout the western Russian River Valley. Dutton-Goldfield does not source grapes exclusively from Dutton Ranch vineyards but these vineyards form the core of the lineup.

Winemaker Dan Goldfield gained his reputation for Burgundian-focused wines while working at La Crema and later Hartford Court. He joined Steve on a handshake in a vineyard in 1998 and they established a winery that today is among California's best producers of cool climate varietals. His winemaking regimen for Pinot Noir is explained fully in the "In the Cellar with Dan" section of the website at www.duttongoldfield.com.

Unlike the single cooperage Pinot Noir wines of Soliste reviewed in this issue, the Dutton-Goldfield Pinot Noir wines are vinified using an array of barrels for each of the single-vineyard wines. Dan purchased barrels from nine different coopers for the 2015 vintage. The Pinot Noirs often undergo a spring "rack and back" to choose the barrel array for the final aging of the wines.

The Dutton-Goldfield Tasting Room in Graton is open daily, offering several tasting experiences that can be booked online. In the Tasting Room, the winery just celebrated its 20th anniversary with a Harvest Party. Many of the wines are available for purchase on the winery's website. Magnums are available.



The wines reviewed here represent the nine 2016 single-vineyard Pinot Noirs and one blended Pinot Noir called Deviate. The Docker Hill Vineyard in Comptche in Mendocino County is a new addition to the Dutton-Goldfield lineup. Dan looks for exotic vineyard sites farmed by people with unique personalities and this addition fit that goal.

2016 Dutton-Goldfield Angel Camp Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.55, 370 cases, \$58. Sourced from a 11.5-acre vineyard located west of Philo on a knoll overlooking the Navarro River and valley. Clones "828," 667, and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top co-fermentation of clones, aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose opens slowly in the glass to reveal pleasing aromas of dark red cherry and black raspberry fruits with prominent spice. Bold, yet polished and easily approachable, featuring mid weight flavors of boysenberry, black cherry and spice. A moderately firm tannic backbone adds needed support for the lush fruit load. Nicely composed, with a grand finish filled with black cherry fruit.* **93.**



2016 Dutton-Goldfield Azaya Ranch Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.58, 246 cases, \$62. This Marin County vineyard was planted by Mark Pasternak for the McEvoy family. Clones 667, "828," and 115. Great natural acidity is a hallmark of this site. 100% de-stemmed, 7-day cold soak, open-top fermentation. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new.

Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Easy to find superlatives for this beauty that offers enticing aromas of blueberry, blackberry, pomegranate, spice and rose petal aromas. Plush and engaging on the palate in a mid weight plus style feature a gorgeous array of fruits including blueberry, blackberry and raspberry. This wine has impressive harmony, freshness and vibrancy that draw the drinker back to the glass. Simply sublime. **95.**



2016 Dutton-Goldfield Devil's Gulch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.57, 395 cases, \$72. A steep, terraced vineyard owned and farmed by Mark Pasternak. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top fermentation. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *A Burgundian nose of earth, mulch, potpourri and meat. An array of dark fruits including blackberry and black current show up on the satisfying mid palate and finish. Silken in texture, with melded tannins, finishing long with an earthbound fruit fragrance. Tasted two days later, the fruit aromatics were just beginning to arrive.* **91.**

2016 Dutton-Goldfield Docker Hill Vineyard Mendocino County Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.58, 264 cases, \$68. Vineyard planted in 2010 to a variety of Dijon and heritage clones. This bottling contains clones "828," Pommard and Swan selection. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top co-fermentation of clones. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 45% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Leading off are aromas of black cherry, blackberry and underbrush and peat. There is a noticeable redwood forest tone to the black cherry and black raspberry fruits offered in a middleweight style. Sleek and silky, with a modestly firm tannic spine, and finishing with a forest floor fragrance.* **90.**



2016 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch - Emerald Ridge Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.58, 798 cases, \$62. Vineyard planted by Steve Dutton in 2001. Clones "828," Pommard, 2A, and 667. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top fermentation of clonal blocks separately. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of blackberry preserves and forest floor lead to vigorous mid weight flavors of earth-kissed purple and black berry fruits. The supportive oak chimes in with a hint of toast, spice and savory tobacco. The wine offers a glossy mouthfeel with integrated tannins and a perfumed, cherry-fueled finish. Wines like this are a blessing.* **94.**

2016 Dutton-Goldfield Fox Den Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.51, TA 0.57, 767 cases, \$62. The vineyard is located on the western border of Green Valley and just above the town of Occidental. Goldridge sandy loam soil is very sandy leading to low vigor vines and slow ripening. Dan Goldfield and Steve Dutton planted this 8-acre vineyard in 2002. Clones 667, 777 and 115. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top fermentation of clones separately. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, raspberry, vanilla, baking spices and Thanksgiving kitchen lead off. Lightest in weight of all the 2016 single vineyard wines, yet packed with fleshy flavors of cherry, raspberry and spice with gentle oak treatment. Silky in the mouth with gracious tannins and a lively, lip-smacking finish.* **93.**

2016 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch - Freestone Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.62, 627 cases, \$72. This vineyard is located in the extreme southwestern corner of the Russian River Valley on the coastal side of the Petaluma wind gap at the climatic margin for ripening grapes. Planted in 1996 and 1997 above the little town of Freestone. Tiny grape berries with thick skins produce highly concentrated wines. A combination of the 1996 planting of 115, 2A and 114 co-fermented and the 1997 planting of 667. Although fermented separately, the two blocks were blended soon after draining. No press wine in this blend. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top fermentation. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. A big wine with graceful intentions offering aromas of fertile earth, spice, boysenberry and blackberry. Full-bodied flavors of sappy purple and black fruits flood the mouth with goodness. There are tones of earth and iron in the background. The supportive oak and tannins keep the wine sleek and honorable. The bodacious fruit shows uncommon persistence on the finish.* **93.**



2016 Dutton-Goldfield McDougall Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.55, 392 cases, \$62. The vineyard sits on a ridge at 1,100 feet neighboring Hirsch and Martinelli vineyards. 9-acres planted to two Dijon clones. 100% de-stemmed, 7-day cold soak, open-top fermentation. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of fresh black raspberry, black cherry, vanilla and fertile earth. The black cherry and boysenberry fruits show impressive phenolic ripeness in this mid weight plus styled wine. The fruit seems to grab hold of the palate on attack and refuse to let go on the finish. The balance is impeccable with envious integration of oak, and the overall impression is delight.* **94.**



2016 Dutton-Goldfield Redwood Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.60, 502 cases, \$62. The 32-acre Putnam Vineyard is located in the Annapolis area of the far Sonoma Coast six miles from the Pacific Ocean. The site is above the fog line and surrounded by giant redwoods native to the area. The combination of gravelly soil and deficit irrigation leads to low yielding vines producing thick-skinned, small berries and concentrated flavors. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top fermentation. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. I loved the intriguing nose of Bing cherry, exotic spice, clove, and woody perfume. This delicious beauty makes you sit up in your chair. Luscious mid weight flavors of boysenberry, black cherry and briar are complimented by gracious tannins and invigorating acidity. The oak is deftly positioned, the elegant composure is alluring, and the finish is like a Hollywood movie you never want to end.* **95.**



2016 Dutton-Goldfield Deviate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.59, 499 cases, \$72. A blend of grapes from Jentoft Vineyard in Green Valley planted to the Calera clone by Steve Dutton in 2003, and Putnam Vineyard near Annapolis on the far Sonoma Coast. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open-top fermentation. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. A message of quality is clear in this wine that leads off with aromas of black cherry, wine cave and nutty oak. Expansive, mouth filling purple and black berry fruits engage the mid palate with purpose and persist through a very long finish. There is just a kiss of oak, a touch of spice, and a subtle smoky thread. The tannins are invisible and the overall impression is one of harmony. Even better when tasted two days after opening.* **94.**

More Recently Tasted Pinot Noir

Kelley Fox Wines, McMinnville, OR

Kelley Fox was the winemaker for Scott Paul Wines for ten years (2005-2015), during which time she launched her own label that focuses on small lots of Pinot Noir from the Momtazi and Maresh vineyards. The Momtazi wines tend to feature deeper color, more extraction, more tannin and richer dark fruit flavor. The Maresh wines tend to be more delicate with red fruit aromas and flavors.

Since 2015, Fox's Pinot Noir wines contain all whole clusters. She uses neutral oak only, striving for unadorned character.

The wines are sold through a mailing list and on the website at www.kelleyfoxwines.com.

2015 Kelley Fox Wines Momtazi Vineyard "TIR" McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 75 cases, \$60, screw cap. Sourced from unique small block vines surrounded by Oregon oak trees. "TR" is Farsi for "star." A Demeter Certified Biodynamic® wine. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose offers aromas of red cherry, cranberry, underbrush and oak spice and toast. The core of cherry and raspberry fruit has personality and is accompanied by subtle purple berry and plum flavors. Discreet in weight, with husky ripe fruit tannins, yet no astringency on the finish. A bit of complimentary oak plies the background. 92.*

2016 Kelley Fox Wines Momtazi Vineyard "TIR" Mc Minnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 86 cases, \$75. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Inviting scents of black cherry, seasoned beef and toasty oak. A bold and rich wine in a mid weight plus style with flavors of sweet black cherry and blackberry fruits. Packed with fruit, yet vibrant and refined with a plush mouthfeel, genteel tannins and a generous dark fruit fueled finish. When you drink a wine, you want to taste fruit and this wine delivers. 93.*



2015 Kelley Fox Wines Maresh Vineyard Star of Bethlehem Flower Block Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 86 cases, \$75, screw cap. Old, self-rooted vines. "Star of Bethlehem" flowers grow in the vine rows of this block. *Light ruby red color in the glass. A perfumed nose offers aromas of white flowers, red berry, cherry, spice, sandalwood and red licorice. Light in weight in a very delicate style with flavors of red cherry and red berry, a touch of spice and a hint of herbaceousness. The tannins are very fine grained and the acidity provides good verve. This diaphanous wine may be too demurely extracted for those seeking richer fruit flavor. 91.*

2016 Kelley Fox Wines Maresh Vineyard Red Barn Block Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 46 cases, \$60. Sourced from the Maresh Vineyard's original blocks of Wadenswil and Pommard surrounding the Maresh Red Barn. Jim Maresh, who founded Maresh Red Hills Vineyard (fifth oldest vineyard in Oregon) still tractor farms the vines each year. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Expressive nose offering aromas of red cherry, blueberry and rose petal. Elegant and refined in a comforting, classy mid weight style with pleasing richness of dark red cherry flavor. Exquisitely balanced with a modest but thoroughly agreeable finish. 92.*

Kingston Family Vineyards, Casablanca Valley, Chile

Kingston is a boutique winery located on a farm that has been family-owned for a century. The winery produces Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc from estate vineyards in Casablanca, Chile.

2017 Kingston Family Vineyards Tobriano Casablanca Valley Chile Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 740 cases, \$26. Released September 2018. Aged 8 months in French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby red color in the*

glass. My first thought in smelling and tasting this wine was oak. Aromas of espresso and toast overwhelm the cherry fruit scent. The light to mid weight core of red cherry fruit is overlain with dark espresso and tobacco flavor. The wine has some charm in the form of an elegant composure, gentle tannins, good juiciness, and a silky texture, but there is just too much oak at play. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **87.**

2017 Kingston Family Vineyards Alazan Casablanca Valley Chile Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 350 cases, \$40. Aged 8 months in French oak barrels and concrete egg vat. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of espresso, black cherry, raspberry and earthy flora. Mid weight flavors of black cherry and toasty oak in a polished style with mouth filling mid palate presence, finishing long with generous cherry goodness. Less oak overlay is evident when the wine was tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **89.**



2017 Kingston Family Vineyards Sabino Casablanca Valley Chile Chardonnay 13.0% alc., 250 cases, \$30, screw cap. Released September 2018. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels and concrete egg vat. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Very inviting aromas of lemon, apple, white peach and floral bouquet. The flavors of lemon, pineapple and pear are arrayed in a very satisfying style with commendable balance and polish, with hardly perceptible oak input.* **92.**

Siduri Wines, Santa Rosa, CA

Winemaker Adam Lee's 25th harvest. The following wines represent the southernmost regions and vineyards in the winery's "West Coast Pinot Noir" portfolio. Adam has made Pinot Noir from the Santa Lucia Highlands since 1997 and from the Sta. Rita Hills since 2000.

The wines are available via a mailing list and on the website at www.siduri.com, as well as at the Siduri Tasting Room in Santa Rosa, the winery's Wine Lounge in Healdsburg, and through distribution to select wine retailers and restaurants nationally.



2016 Siduri Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.55, \$40, screw cap. A blend of grapes from Garys', Rosella's, Pisoni, Sierra Mar, Soberanos, Lemoravo and Escolle vineyards. 15% whole cluster. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels, 54% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. The nose offers primarily grounded aromas of mulch and potpourri with only hints of black cherry and vanilla. Full-bodied flavors of blackberry, black raspberry and cassis in a fat, saucy, lush style with modest tannins, a silken texture, and well-integrated alcohol. A weighty wine that packs a wallop but lacks a bit of verve.* **88.**



2016 Siduri Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.62, \$35, screw cap. A blend of grapes from Hilliard Bruce, La Encantada, John Sebastiano and Radian vineyards. 30% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Clean and fresh aromas of blackberry, blueberry-pomegranate and spice. Saucy, fat and lush flavors of black raspberry, blackberry and pomegranate. The gregarious fruit makes an impression on the mid palate and finish. Nicely composed with integrated tannin and juicy acidity along with a compliment of oak in the background.* **90.**

2016 Siduri Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.63, \$60, screw cap. 30% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of turned earth, oak cask and black cherry. A muscular, full-bodied style offering thick flavors of dark red and black cherry, blackberry, black tea, and espresso. There is sprightly acidity that keeps the fruit load upbeat. Highly atypical for this vineyard showing unusually prominent tannins, dark rather than red fruits, and sappy rather than demure fruit character.* **89.**

2016 Siduri John Sebastiano Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.59, \$55, screw cap. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Intriguing aromas of dark berry mash, oak spice and rose petal. Sleek and sexy in the mouth in a mid weight plus style with waves of purple and blackberry fruits underlain with vibrant acidity. The whole package is harmonious with an uplifting finish. 93.*



Williams Selyem, Healdsburg, CA

I have been a member of the mailing list of this highly-regarded winery for over 25 years but have not sampled the wines since the 2013 vintage. I acquired three bottles from the 2016 vintage fall offering to taste and the wines are reviewed here. Needless to say, I was disappointed, especially at the price point of these wines.

Williams Selyem wines are sold exclusively through a mailing list. Private tours and tastings are available by advanced appointment to list members and their guests only. The website is www.williamsselyem.com.

2016 Williams Selyem Burt Williams' Morning Dew Ranch Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., \$85. Last vintage as Burt Williams sold the vineyard in 2015. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very reserved aromas of cherry, underbrush and smoky oak. A gentle wine that picks up some intensity over time in the glass but remains drab. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry and raspberry lack mid palate and finishing resolve. There is a prominent citric note that pervades through the finish. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 88.*

2016 Williams Selyem Rochioli Riverblock Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$85. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherry, exotic spice, blueberry, briar and toasty oak lead to a mid weight styled wine presenting the essence of black cherry underlain with oak-inspired licorice and toast flavors. Soft in the mouth, with shy acidity, balanced tannins and some length on the finish. Hard to criticize but not much to get excited about. 89.*

2016 Williams Selyem Eastside Road Neighbors Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$59. *Dark garnet color in the glass. The nose opens reluctantly to reveal aromas of black cherry, cola and Middle Eastern spices. The flavor profile replicates the aromas in a middleweight styled wine. Tastes very close to black cherry cola. Bright acidity adds verve, yet moderately aggressive tannins stick out a bit. The wine finishes with impressive deep cherry fragrance that persists. 91.*

More Wines



2016 Acrobat Oregon Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$19.99, screw cap. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with scents of strawberry, red cherry and sandalwood. Simple, yet satisfying, in a light weighted style offering an array of red fruits and a touch of oak in the background. Easygoing tannins make for gracious drinking. An elegant introduction to Oregon Pinot Noir. 88.*

2017 Cloudline Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$22, screw cap. From the Drouhin family. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose offers aromas of briar, dried herbs, new oak and a hint of cherry. Light in weight and shallow in concentration, offering oak-infused flavors of cherry and red berry. The tannins show up in force on the finish. 85.*



2017 J. Lohr Falcon's Perch Monterey County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.73, TA 0.58, \$17.

This wine is drawn from multiple vineyard sites in the Arroyo Seco and Santa Lucia Highlands appellations. Clones 777, 667, 115, Pommard, 2A and 114. Harvest Brix 25.3° average. 3-day cold soak, open-top fermentation, aged in two-thirds stainless steel tanks and one-third aged French oak cooperage. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Cherry and strawberry aromas are framed by nutty oak. Light in weight, but endowed with pleasing red cherry and strawberry flavors cloaked in subtle espresso oak. An easy drinker, with integrated tannins and a suave mouthfeel. A*

forward drinking wine that can be a daily workhorse at the dinner table. 88.



2017 Lucky Rock Wine Co. County Cuvée California Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 1050 cases, \$20.

56% San Benito County (Vista Verde Vineyard), 24% Sonoma County (Morelli Lane Vineyard), and 20% Monterey County (White Sage Vineyard). Winemakers Aaron and Jesse Inman have made wine since 2006. They were raised by gold-mining parents. The wine company was named after one of the more memorable mines of their youth. "Wines made with intention, not pretension."

Aged 10 months in French oak barrels. *Light ruby red color in the glass. An easygoing, elegantly styled wine with aromas and flavors of dark red cherry and raspberry framed by silken tannins*

and a sniff of oak. Light to mid weight in style, with bright acidity and a modest finish. 88.

2016 Rainstorm Oregon Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$20, screw cap. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass.*

Aromas of red cherry and toasted oak lead to a light weighted wine with red cherry and red berry flavors framed by gossamer tannins. A sleek, Pinot Noir beverage. 85.



2015 Yamhill Valley Vineyards Estate McMinnville

Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.64, TA

0.57, \$22, screw cap. This winery has been family owned and operated since 1983. The estate vineyard was planted in 1983 and consists of 150 acres planted to multiple clones. Harvest Brix 24.2°. 100% de-stemmed, 1-day cold soak, inoculated and fermented in 1.5 ton

microbins. Free run aged 10 months in 11% new oak. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Inviting aromas of cherry, cranberry, underbrush and spice. Both savory and fruity on the palate in a well-mannered, relaxed style featuring flavors of red fruits and dried herbs. Excellent lift and juiciness with no oak intrusion, balanced tannins, and a lip-smacking finish. Even better when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 90.*



Pinot Briefs

Malibu Coast AVA Damaged During Woolsey Fire Both wineries and vineyards in the Malibu Coast AVA were heavily damaged or destroyed by the Woolsey fire in the hills west of Los Angeles. That said, some vineyards served as firebreaks that saved homes and other structures. The Malibu Coast AVA includes 44,590 acres with a total of 200 acres planted to grape vines.

Oregon Vineyards Lost to Red Blotch Recently, I wrote extensively about the threat of Grapevine Red Blotch Virus (BRBaV) to vineyards in California and Oregon: www.princeofpinot.com/article/2084/. A recent article at www.ijpr.org/post/oregon-winegrowers-losing-vines-red-blotch#stream/0, reported that at least one Oregon winegrower was tearing out a vineyard due to red blotch infestation.

Merry Edwards Appoints Successor Winemaker Merry Edwards has elevated Associate Winemaker Heidi von der Mehden to the position of Winemaker, effective at the start of the 2018 harvest. Merry remains CEO and CFO of her eponymous brand that was founded in 1997. More details forthcoming in an upcoming issue of the *PinotFile* in which current Merry Edwards Pinot Noir releases will also be published.

ZOS Halo Wine Preserver This easy to use wine preservation system simply inserts into the wine bottle like a stopper. The cartridge contains a patented, nontoxic material that absorbs 100% of the oxygen in the wine bottle, stopping the oxidation process, and extending the life of the wine for up to 2 months. The cartridge lasts up to a dozen bottles, depending on usage and exposure to oxygen in between bottles. An electronic tester cartridge accompanies the wine saver kit and tells the user if the cartridge is still good or needs to be replaced. The price is \$74.95 through Wine Enthusiast or Amazon. I have not tried the device.



Winemaker Jesus Guillen Passed Away Jesus was a friend of mine with whom I tasted wines on several occasions. An unexpected battle with an aggressive cancer took his life at the young age of 38. He is survived by his wife, Yuliana and son Adrian. Jesus moved to Oregon in 2002 after graduating with a degree in Computer Systems Engineering in Mexico. Following graduation, a visit to see his father, Jesus, Sr., who worked at White Rose Estate in the Dundee Hills, led to an interest in winemaking. He began his wine career working in the vineyards for Patricia Green Cellars and later alongside his father at White Rose Estate. Much of his winemaking acumen was self taught. Greg Sanders, owner of White Rose Estate, recognized Jesus's

interest and talent and offered him a job in the cellar. He became the head winemaker at White Rose Estate in 2008. Two years prior, he launched Guillen Family Wines with a small amount of fruit from Vista Hills Vineyard. These were special Pinot Noir wines that featured 100% whole cluster inclusion. Jesus was a humble man with a keen palate, a loving father, a dedicated husband, a caring son, and an inspiration to all he knew. He will always be remembered in the highest regard by those he touched through his Wines Made in Beautiful Oregon, Por Manos Mexicanas. Winter's Hill Estate in the Dundee Hills is hosting the Guillen Family Benefit Wine Sale and Tasting on Saturday, November 24, to raise money for bills and his family. All tasting fees and wine purchases will go directly to the Guillen family. For event details, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/guillen-family-benefit-wine-sale-and-tasting-one-day-only-tickets-52371906783. You can also honor Jesus's legacy by buying Guillen Family wine at www.guillengamily.com/shop.



Vintage Book from Filmmaker and Author David Baker Baker is the producer and director of the acclaimed documentary *American Wine Story*. *Vintage* is his debut novel, a story of a down-on-his-luck wine and food writer and his quest for a "lost vintage" in Burgundy, a legendary wine that was thought to have been stolen by the Nazis in World War II. The book is available at Amazon (\$15.27 in paperback).



smoldering, the film was financially backed by Visit California, the state's tourism publicity arm. The film was screened for several hundred Sonoma County residents October 19 and was shown twice during the Napa Valley Film Festival. I am not sure about future screenings and streaming availability.

California 2018 Wine Grape Harvest Report The 2018 growing season had moderate temperatures throughout the spring and summer with harvest beginning anywhere from 10 days to three weeks later than in 2017 according to the California Wine Institute. Vintners reported exceptional quality due to consistent growing conditions and cooler temperatures, allowing the grapes to mature slowly. Yields are projected to be 4.1 million tons in 2018, up 2% from 2017 and above the historical average of 3.9 million tons. The full 2018 California Wine Harvest Report is available at www.wineinstitute.org/files/WineInstitute_HarvestReport2018.pdf.

Santa Cruz Mountains SCM Wines Smartphone App This new app has a digital Passport available (\$65) that can be used to redeem tastings at more than 50 participating wineries on any day they are open. The app lets you check in digitally, search information about all the wineries, and filter for wine varieties, location and special amenities. To install (requires Android), visit www.play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.golocalapps.santacruzwineries&hl=en_US.



Head for the Hills Five special wineries in the Eola-Amity Hills of the Willamette Valley are hosting a progressive tasting experience Thanksgiving weekend, Saturday and Sunday, November 24 and 25, from 11 to 4 pm. The wineries are Bethel Heights Vineyard, Cristom Vineyards, Evening Land, Lingua Franca and Walter Scott. Visit all five wineries over the weekend and you will be entered into a raffle for special prizes.

How To Make Any Wine Taste Better As reported at www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2018/11/heston-reveals-trick-to-make-wine-taste-better/, molecular gastronomist chef Heston Blumenthal revealed that the trick to making any wine taste better is to picture someone "you love dearly" while you are drinking the wine. On the other hand, drinking a wine while thinking of someone you don't like is likely to give the wine a bitter aftertaste. Heston is no crackpot. He runs the three Michelin star Fat Duck and the two star Dinner by Heston Blumenthal in Australia. He believes the difference in how we perceive wine is due to the link between taste and memory. Recent research from Columbia University has found that it is possible to manipulate flavor perception by activating certain regions of the brain.



List of Wine-Related Things That Need to be “De-Invented”

A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* about a short list of things that desperately need to be ‘de-invented’ got me to thinking about things in the world of wine that should have never been invented.

- 1 Wax capsules
- 2 Heavy bottles
- 3 Pinot Noir in cans and boxes
- 4 The term ‘terroir’ - this word belongs to the French and it should stay in France
- 5 The term ‘minerality’ - the most ambiguous and poorly defined term used in wine descriptions
- 6 Wine competitions - a supposed standard of objectivity that is totally unfounded
- 7 100-point wines - wine writers need to admit that perfection in wine is not attainable
- 8 Cheap Pinot Noir
- 9 Wine preservation systems - can’t we just stick a cork in it and finish the bottle the next day?
- 10 Pinot Noir Blanc - a slutty form of Pinot Noir