



PinotFile

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

Spindrift Cellars: The Little Winery That Could

This smallish family-owned winery is not located among the popular and well-known Northern Willamette Valley wineries. Rather, it can be found in the Southern Willamette Valley in the town of Philomath. Founded by Matt and Tabitha Compton in 2003, the winery produces multiple varietals under the Spindrift label and Pinot Noir under the Compton Family Wines label.



Matt has been crafting wine in Oregon for over 20 years but is also a grower who owns West Vine Farms, a vineyard management company, and manages most of the vineyards from which Spindrift Cellars sources fruit. Growing up in Wisconsin, Matt caught the farming bug and was driving a tractor and baling hay at the age of 10. After studying horticulture in college on the East Coast for a year, he took a trip around the country. He

visited a friend who was attending graduate school at Oregon State University (OSU) in Corvallis and when Matt saw the campus and the town of Corvallis, he was hooked. He moved out to Oregon from the East Coast lacking a job. Matt enrolled at OSU and started working for researchers at the school.

Matt made his first wine as a home winemaker in 1996 while working at OSU's experimental Woodhall Vineyard outside Alpine. He developed a reputation as a talented farmer, and in 2000, he launched his own company called West Vine Farms initiated with a management agreement for Deerhaven Vineyard (he still manages the vineyard today). Matt became the vineyard manager at Benton Lane Winery as well as managing other vineyards. In 2003, he made his first commercial vintage at 720 cellars, hoping to build a winery business.

In 2004, Matt and Tabitha founded Small World Wine Company with partners Jeff and Diane Cyan. At the same time, the two couples started a wine bar in Corvallis. In 2006, Matt left Benton Lane Winery and together with wife Tabitha started Spindrift Cellars. Domaine Meriwether produced wine at their facility and Matt got to know their winemaker, Ray Walsh, who became an important mentor.

The winery produced 1,000 cases of wine during the first Spindrift Cellars harvest and have steadily increased output, making 8,000 cases of wine from more than ten different varietals in 2015. Today, Matt's heart is in Pinot Noir and he plans to scale back the number of varietals that Spindrift Cellars offers. West Vine Farms now only manages the vineyards from which Matt gets fruit for his Spindrift wines.

Tabitha manages the day-to-day operation of the winery including sales, advertising, and marketing as well as having the hardest job - raising three boys. Other members of the extended family are also involved.

Matt Compton's personal label is Compton Family Wines. These wines are reflective of special vineyards that Matt has overseen and managed through the years. A premium sparkling wine is offered under the SEA 02 brand and recently won a Gold Medal at the San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition.

The winery's tasting room is located at the winery in Philomath and is open Friday-Sunday afternoons during winter, Thursday-Sunday afternoons during summer, or by appointment. The wines are sold on the website at www.spindriftcellars.com and www.comptonwines.com.

I am featuring this winery for a couple of reasons. I was impressed with the 2015 vintage wines submitted for review in the past and even more impressed with the 2016 vintage wines currently reviewed. These wines have the handprint of an experienced grower and winemaker. **The wines also represent extremely good value, especially since I consider them equal in quality to any wines currently being produced in the Northern Willamette Valley.**

The vineyard sources for these wines are from the Southern Willamette Valley. The soils here are shallow, well-drained volcanic basalt combined with marine sedimentary rock and/or alluvial deposits. The two Compton Pinot Noir cuvées show the difference in Pinot Noir grown in these two different soil types.



2016 Spindrift Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.49, \$22, screw cap. This wine was featured and was one of the top wines reviewed in the previous issue in an article devoted to Oregon Pinot Noir wines priced at \$30 and below. Sourced from seven small vineyards, many of which are over 15-years-old and all are dry-farmed. Clones include Pommard, Wädenswil, 115, 777 and 667. The wine was aged in French oak barrels for over 10 months.

Moderately light garnet color in the glass. I was drawn into the glass by the aromas of cherry, strawberry, rose petal, and sandalwood. Light to mid weight in style, with a generous black cherry core of fruit that shows good vigor and intensity. A solid wine with a delightful cherry-embossed finish. Score: 90



2016 Spindrift Cellars BoVine Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.60, 92 cases, \$28, screw cap. 5-acre vineyard planted in 2008 by Matt Compton and located in Alpine, Oregon. Clones are Pommard, Wädenswil and Dijon 667. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Freshness is the word for this wine. Aromas of raspberry, earthy flora and spice with a complimentary hint of oak. Striking attack of Bing cherry, raspberry and baking spice flavors with a subtle oak backwash. An exquisitely balanced wine that is ready out of the gate. 92.*



2016 Spindrift Cellars OSU Woodhall Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$28, screw cap. This Oregon State University Vineyard consists of 26 acres located about 25 miles south of the University's Corvallis campus. First planted in 1976, there are 6 acres of Pinot Noir planted on south-facing slopes at 450 to 700 feet elevation.

Bellpine series and Dupree Series sedimentary rocks. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. An earthbound wine with considerable charm. Wholesome aromas and flavors of dark red cherry and berry in a mid weight plus style. Gentle tannins, a soothing texture and a glorious finish packed with showy ripe fruit. 94.*



2016 Spindrift Cellars Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.61, 148 cases, \$32, screw cap. Sourced from five vineyards, most of which are over 15 years old and all are dry-farmed. Clones are Pommard, Wädenswil, 115, 777 and 667. All vineyard fruit was co-fermented in a 2.5-ton open-top wood fermenter. Aged in French oak barrels for a number of months. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Extroverted aromas of red cherry, red berry and sandalwood. Caressing and elegant in the mouth, with intense waves of dark red fruits accented with baking spices. A spirited wine with impeccable harmony and a long aftertaste. I wanted to swallow this one. 94.*



2017 Spindrift Cellars Willamette Valley Chardonnay 13.1% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.60, RS 0.07%, 252 cases, \$22, screw cap. Grapes were whole cluster pressed, fermented and aged in French oak barrels, 40% new, for 4 months. Partial malolactic fermentation with weekly lees stirring. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with scents of pear, vanilla custard and granola. Cozy in the mouth, with flavors of pineapple, pear and lemon creme with a subtle grassy note. Slightly creamy in texture and easy to like. 91.*



2016 Spindrift Cellars OSU Woodhall Vineyard Willamette Valley Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.64, 142 cases, screw cap. Clone 108 first planted in 1976. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon, apple and nori. Classy and vibrant, with fresh flavors of pear, pineapple, vanilla and a hint of flint. Sensual rather than fruity, with gorgeous balance. 93.*



2016 Compton Alpine Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.60, 401 cases, \$38, screw cap. Sourced from multiple vineyards and includes Pommard, Wädenswil, 777 and 667 clones. from the Monroe, Oregon area. Soils are Basalt and Red Jory series volcanic soils that typical show redder fruit aromas and flavors and elegant tannins. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Assertive aromas of cherry, spice, fertile earth and rock quarry. Welcome charge of juicy black cherry fruit framed by modest tannins and a touch of toasty oak. Satiny in mouthfeel, with a pleasingly luscious cherry finish. 93.*



2016 Compton Llewellyn Cuvée Old Vine Series Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.62, 223 cases, \$38. Sourced from multiple vineyards averaging 35 years of age and all dry-farmed located in the southern coastal foothills of the Willamette Valley. Clones are mostly Pommard, Wädenswil and Dijon 115 planted in marine alluvial and sedimentary soils that typically show darker fruits, earth tones and heavier and chewier tannins.. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Subdued, but pleasant aromas of cherry, spice cake and fertile earth. Exuberant cherry dominates the fruit profile in a middleweight style with gracious tannins, cohesive acidity, and a cherry-drenched finish. 92*



NV SEA 02 Sparkling Wine 13.7% alc., pH 3.33, TA 0.58, RS 0.42%, 1,018 cases, \$20, bottle cap. Produced and bottled by Small Word Wine Co. LLC, McMinnville. Winemaker Matt Compton. A blend of Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc grapes. Proceeds from the sale of this wine will be contributed to the Marine Mammal Institute at Oregon State University. Gold Medal San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. *Moderate pink color in the glass. The nose offers a combination of pink grapefruit, cherry, and botanical aromas including algae. A hearty rosé style wine featuring flavors of red cherry, red raspberry and blood orange with a mild sprinkling of herbs in the background. Bright, upbeat and refreshing, with a slight sweetness on the finish.* **90.**

Failla Stakes A Claim in Oregon

Failla (pronounced FAY-la) was originally founded in 1998 as Failla Jordan, taking its name from the husband-and-wife team of winemaker Ehren Jordan and fellow debtor Anne-Marie Failla. After three vintages, legal issues arose over the use of the word Jordan, as in Jordan Winery, forcing a name change to simply “Failla.”

Ehren Jordan is quite a vagabond. He is an East Coast transplant who majored in art history and classic archeology at George Washington University while working part time in a retail wine store. The experience convinced him to go West and he settled in Aspen, Colorado, where he skied and became a sommelier at a restaurant. He then set his sites on the North Coast region of California. When he arrived in Napa Valley, his first job at Joseph Phelps was a tour guide but he soon was hired to do cellar work and winemaking. He then moved to Europe to work in France’s Rhone Valley, returning stateside to take a winemaking job at Neyers in 1994 and then Turley in 1996.

Under the Failla label, Ehren has crafted praiseworthy Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah almost exclusively from cool-climate sources in the North Coast including an Estate Vineyard located in the Fort Ross-Seaview AVA.

Still on the move, Ehren’s quest for seeking out outstanding vineyards in unique places culminated with the establishment of a base in Oregon, and he began fashioning wines from both Oregon and California. Ehren initially made Pinot Noir from Oregon’s Seven Springs Vineyard at his California winery, but in 2016 began making Oregon wines in Oregon at the Carlton Winemakers Studio.

In May 2018, Failla Wines moved its Oregon operations to Zenith Vineyard in the Eola-Amity Hills. The 83-acre Zenith Vineyard was first planted in 1989 by Pat and Patti O’Connor but was owned most recently by Tim and Kari Ramey. The vineyard has been the source of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes for 20 winery clients, and in 2017, 16 wineries produced a Zenith Vineyard-designated wine. In December 2017, Zenith Vineyard acquired the winery and tasting room on the property that was established in 2008 by a partnership between Zenith Vineyard and St. Innocent Winery. St. Innocent’s Mark Vlossak had been the Zenith Vineyard winemaker since the first vintage in 2006. Ehren became the winemaker for Zenith Vineyard beginning in 2018 and Mark moved his St. Innocent Winery to another location in Salem.

A recent release announcement e-mail approached the question, “What is the difference between Oregon and California wines?” Ehren responded, “Easy. Everything. Soil, climate, average rainfall, clonal material, degree days and historic geographic events are just some of the differences that I can think of. They couldn’t be more different.”

The vineyards that Failla Oregon works with are Bjornson, Chehalem Mountain, Eola Springs and Seven Springs. In 2016, Failla offered six Pinot Noirs from throughout the Willamette Valley and in 2017 the lineup was expanded to include Chardonnay, Riesling and Grüner Veltliner. Future plans call for developing an 80-acre vineyard site in Dallas, Oregon, located southwest of the new winery tasting room off Zena Road in Salem.

Failla will continue to produce Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from California, double dipping as it were. The spring releases of 2017 vintage wines were just announced and include a Sonoma Coast Chardonnay, an Estate Fort Ross-Seaview Chardonnay, a Hudson Vineyard Chardonnay, a Haynes Vineyard Chardonnay, a Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, a Keefer Ranch Pinot Noir, a Pearlessence Vineyard Pinot Noir and a Savoy Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Failla Wines has a tasting room in St. Helena, CA open by appointment and a tasting room in Oregon open daily and by appointment. Several tasting options are offered at both locations. Visit www.faillawinesoregon.com and www.faillawines.com. The wines are sold primarily through a mailing list.

A podcast featuring Ehren Jordan’s Oregon foothold is available at www.ildrinktothatpod.com, #456, recorded October 19, 2018.

The 2016 vintage wines reviewed here struck me as more “California” in style than many Oregon Pinot Noirs in that the fruit was riper and the wines had significant extraction and structure.



2016 Failla Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.59, 2,000 cases, \$28. This wine was featured in the previous issue in the article about Oregon Pinot Noir wines priced at \$30 or less. Native fermentations, 30% whole cluster, aged 11 months on lees in French oak barrels, 15% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Deep and intoxicating aromas of black cherry, black raspberry and dark rose petal. Full-bodied core of black cherry and boysenberry fruits offering an intense attack and expansive mouth feel. A modest oak accent is evident as is a savory herbal thread. Fruit-forward, with healthy tannins and a long, sweet, fruit-driven and somewhat astringent finish. The aggressive tannins need time or decanting to ameliorate. Score: 89*

2016 Failla Chehalem Mountain Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.57, 143 cases, \$45. Oregon wine industry pioneer, Dick Erath, first planted this vineyard in 1968. Clone 115. Native fermentations, 30% whole cluster, aged 11 months on lees in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of strawberry, cherry, purple grape and nutty oak in a delightfully balanced, mid weight style with a silky mouthfeel and some finish purpose. I was wanting for a little more flavor impact, but found the wine appealing. 91.*

2016 Failla Eola Springs Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.57, 140 cases, \$42. Vineyard originally planted in 1972. Pommard clone. Native fermentations, 30% whole cluster, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Beautifully crafted, with aromas and flavors of blackest cherry and toasty oak. Sleek and juicy in the mouth with comfortable tannins and a somewhat arrested finish. 92.*



2016 Failla Bjornson Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.62, 144 cases, \$48. Vineyard planted in 2006 in a mix of Nekia and Jory soils. Clones are Pommard, 777 and Wädenswil. Native fermentations, 30% whole cluster, aged 11 months on lees in French oak barrels, 15% new. bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Beguiling scents of black cherry and turned earth. A bold charge of delicious black fruits fills the mouth with goodness, maintaining exuberance through a persistent and generous finish. The well-behaved tannins make for harmonious drinking. This wine displays all the charm of Oregon Pinot. 94.*



2016 Failla Seven Springs Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.61, TA 0.58, 189 cases, \$60. Vineyard established in 1984 by Al MacDonald and dry farmed biodynamically. Native fermentations, Wädenswil clone. 50% whole cluster, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A little heavy handed on the barrel treatment with aromas of cherry, spice, marzipan and bark. Plenty of red cherry and berry fruit sprinkled with herbs and framed by redeeming tannins that keep the fruit in line. The finish is particularly notable for its length. 93.*

Coeur de Terre Vineyard: 2015 Vintage Pinot Noirs Are My Favorites

Scott and Lisa Neal established the Coeur de Terre Vineyard from 1999 to 2007 in the Coast Range foothills of the McMinnville appellation west of the town of McMinnville. Coeur de Terre, which is French for “Heart of the Earth,” was inspired by a large heart-shaped rock found during planting of the vineyard. The 50-acre property includes a winery, tasting room and 23 acres planted primarily to Pinot Noir in both sedimentary and volcanic soils.

This is a winery to be admired for the Neals planted the vineyard themselves and have farmed the vineyard using organic and sustainable methods since its inception. Over 80,000 vines were hand grafted at the estate’s nursery and have been the parent material for all the vines after the initial Renelle’s Block planting. The clonal mix includes Dijon 115, 667, and 777, and Pommard, Wädenswil and field blend selections.

Scott’s focus is on Pinot Noir and produces a Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, and an Estate and four block-designated Estate Pinot Noirs from the home vineyard. Winemaking is traditional using small open-top fermenters, manual punch downs, using both indigenous and cultured yeast strains for fermentations. Aging is carried out in French oak barrels (about 40% for the Estate wines) for up to 18 months.

The block-designated Pinot Noirs all have distinct character due to differences in soil type, clones, elevation, exposure, and age of vines. The wines are all vinified the same to bring out the unique character of each block.

Pinot Gris, Riesling and a Rosé are also produced at attractive prices.

Tasting is available at the winery in McMinnville daily from 11 am to 5 pm. Many enthusiasts belong to one of the three Wine Clubs and receive special pricing, access to limited release wines and invitation to club only events. Jacques Rendu has been the long-time sales manager and tasting room host. Visit the website at www.cdtvineyard.com.

The 2015 vintage at Coeur de Terre was one of the hottest and driest on record, with warm days and cool nights. Bud break was early by about 2 weeks and the growing season preceded quickly. The warmth required the judicious use of irrigation, and combined with proper canopy management, harvest commenced at the end of September, early for this vineyard but only by 2 weeks.

The 2015 Pinot Noirs are my favorites over the ten years I have been tasting wines from Coeur de Terre. Winemaking is experienced and impeccable and the wines truly reflect McMinnville terroir. The wines have an earthy, brambly quality, with supportive tannins. I find them akin to “Burgundy” but possessing more flamboyant fruit. All the wines are approachable now but have the balance and structure to age beautifully. Each of the block bottlings have subtle differences.



2015 Coeur de Terre Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.61, 2,588 cases, \$22. Harvest Brix 22.8°-24.2°. 60% Estate Vineyard with the remaining mostly from the McMinnville AVA. Pommard, Wädenswil, 113, 114, 1215, 667, 777 and Coury clones. Both sedimentary and volcanic soils. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Spiced cherry and fertile earth aromas lead to a middleweight styled wine offering cherry, plum and spice flavors backed by spirited acidity. The lip-smacking finish has good length. Score: 89.*



2015 Coeur de Terre The Heritage Reserve Estate McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.68, 932 cases, \$36. A barrel selection from the entire Estate Vineyard. Harvest Brix 23.6°. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, blackberry jam, forest and woodpile lead off. Husky and lush, offering plenty of purple and black fruit goodness back by firm but not aggressive tannins. Striking length to the finish. This wine’s profile is true to its McMinnville AVA origin. 92.*

2015 Coeur de Terre Renelle’s Block Reserve McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.64, 109 cases, \$65. Original vineyard block planted in 1999, farmed organically from inception. Harvest Brix 23.8°, 2.6 tons per acre. *Dark garnet color in the glass. A solid wine with nicely expressive aromas of dark*

cherry, wooded path and vanilla. The mid weight plus core of blackberry and black grape fruit flavors have a touch of spice and black tea. There is a little more barrel contribution in this wine that offers a deep persistence of black raspberry and blackberry fruit on the intense finish. **92.**

2015 Coeur de Terre Tallulah's Run Reserve McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.69, 114 cases, \$65. Harvest Brix 23.2°, 2.6 tons per acre. A South portion consists of clone 115 planted in sedimentary soils and a North section contains mainly clones 667 and 777 in both volcanic and sedimentary soils. Planted in 2004 at 1,778 vines per acre. *A complex nose offers aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, earth, pipe smoke, old leather and oak spice. The black cherry fruit fills the mouth with overreaching intensity. Hints of earth, pine needle and citrus contribute complexity. Integrated tannins and some finishing presence complete the pleasure.* **93.**



2015 Coeur de Terre Sarah Jane's Block Reserve McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.67, 91 cases, \$65. Six clones planted in 2000 in Willakenzie sedimentary soils and farmed organically since inception. Harvest Brix 23.7°, 2.4 tons per acre. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Tenacious aromas of blackberry, black cherry, wet soil and char. A big boy wine in*

a mid weight plus style, offering a flood of intense and succulent black fruits with striking presence in the mouth and with uncommon finishing generosity. The tannins are perfectly matched to the fruit load, contributing a slight astringency to the finish. I love the fruit in this wine! **94.**



2015 Coeur de Terre Abby's Block Reserve McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.67, 98 cases, \$65. Clones are from a selection of vines in the Estate Vineyard and farmed organically since inception. Complex sedimentary based soils. Harvest Brix 22.9°, 2.5 tons per acre. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A nuanced nose offers aromas of darker cherry, Asian spices, mushroom, underbrush and earth. The best nose in the 2015 lineup. A little lighter in weight with redder fruit compared to the Sarah Jane's Block, featuring cherry and raspberry fruit flavors. This wine does not have quite the finish of the Sarah Jane's Block, but has more elegance*

and charm. Different, but in a good way. **94.**

Recently Tasted Willamette Valley Wines

Bluebird Hill Farm B&B & Cellars, Monroe, OR

Proprietors Neil and Sue Shay are Willamette Valley transplants from Florida who moved to Monroe, Oregon in 2011, and renovated a six-acre property that was overgrown with Christmas trees and populated with bluebirds. The couple had made hobby wines when living in Southern Michigan and had success in local wine competitions. Neil is a food science professor at Oregon State University while also serving as director of the Oregon Wine Institute. Sue had a background in sales and marketing and worked in that role for Airlie Winery and Heart of Willamette Valley wineries. She is the hostess at Bluebird Hill Farm B&B and Cellars.

After spending three years to fully clear the land, the Shays planted 1.5-acres to Pommard clone Pinot Noir. More plantings have followed each year. Currently, the estate vineyard is 3-acres of high-density plantings including the addition of Wädenswil and Dijon clones.

BlueBird Hill Cellars began small, with 214 cases from sourced grapes released from the 2015 vintage. The winemaker is Bobby Moy, a veteran who has crafted wines in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and the Willamette Valley. Nick Cheatham, who has a degree in fermentation science from Oregon State University, is the assistant winemaker and vineyard manager. The winery expanded to seven varietals with the 2016 vintage. Local artist Sky Evans painted the bluebird that graces the attractive wine labels.

A winery tasting room opened in 2016 and tasting is available by appointment and can be scheduled online. Visit www.bluebirdhillcellars.com to purchase wines. The Bluebird Hill Farm B&B, a private hilltop retreat, is available to rent at www.bluebirdhill.biz.



2016 Bluebird Hill Cellars Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 110 cases, \$32. Released May 2018. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Pleasing fragrance of black cherry, dark cranberry and toast. Light to mid weight in concentration, offering forward flavors of black cherry with a deft touch of toasty oak in the background. Elegant and straightforward, with minimal tannins and a cherries jubilee finish. 89.*

2016 Bluebird Hill Cellars Zenith Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 30 cases, \$49. Released August 2018. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose lacks fruit even over time in the glass, offering only aromas of turned earth, ash and woodpile. Discretely concentrated in a mid*

weight style with an assertive core of lush black cherry fruit. A little smoky, with sleek tannins and good persistence on the finish. **91.**

2016 Bluebird Hill Cellars Walnut Ridge Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 30 cases, \$49. Released August 2018. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Cherry, spice and rose petal aromas and flavors in this middleweight offering have appealing freshness. The wine displays gossamer tannins and a modest finish. The cherry fruit has a majestic and seductive quality.* **92.**

2016 Bluebird Hill Cellars Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 30 cases, \$49. Released August 2018. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Charming aromas of cherry, red berry, rose petal and dried herbs. Righteous fruit flavors of cherry and blueberry with hints of tutti-fruity, spice and cocoa. A classy wine with balanced tannins, juicy acidity and persistence on the finish. The lovely fruit floods the mouth with goodness without weight, picking up charm and intensity over time in the glass.* **93.**



2017 Bluebird Hill Cellars Willamette Valley Chardonnay 13.8% alc., 90 cases, \$32. Released August 2018. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Plenty of aromas to explore including lemon oil, pineapple, white peach, pear and buttery biscuit. Slightly creamy in the mouth, with energetic flavors of lemon, grapefruit and apple. Excellent balance and beguiling appeal.* **93.**

Franchere Wine Company, Woodburn, OR

Proprietor and winemaker Mike Hinds was born and raised in Oregon. Work in the music business and web development did not suit him, so after also working for four years in wine retail stores, he began crafting wine at Illahe Vineyards. His first commercial vintage was 2013.

Grapes are sourced primarily from vineyards in the Willamette Valley, including Hanson, Zenith, Havlin and Zena Springs vineyards (all dry farmed). The wines are fermented with native yeasts, vinification proceeds without additives, and the wines are aged in used barrels and neutral tanks.

The wines are made in small lots and sold primarily through a mailing list at www.francherewine.com. Tasting is available by appointment.

The two wines here are from the Van Duzer Corridor AVA. Late afternoon winds are the most prominent feature of the AVA, cooling the region. The result is that the berries are small and thick-skinned and the phenolics ripen at slightly lower sugars compared to most of the Eola-Amity Hills. The unique block that the grapes are sourced from within the Havlin Vineyard consist of ironstone bedrock beneath marine sedimentary topsoil. The vines receive the proper amount of stress so the vines are naturally low yielding and do not require the dropping of fruit or leaf pulling.



2015 Franchere Havlin Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.6% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.59, 60 cases, \$28. Vineyard is located in the Van Duzer Corridor (the Willamette Valley's newest AVA). Soils are marine sedimentary over rare ironstone bedrock. Harvest Brix 21.9°. 60% Pommard, 40% 115. 10% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation, aged 10 months in used oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered with Diam closure. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose opens slowly to reveal aromas of blackberry, spice, bramble and damp soil. Earthbound fruit flavors of purple and black fruits are framed by gutsy, but not aggressive tannins. Good liveliness, with a boysenberry-driven finish.* **89.**

2016 Franchere Havlin Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., pH 3.67, TA 0.60, 40 cases, \$28. Clone 115, Harvest Brix 23.2°. Native yeast fermentation. 10% whole cluster. Aged 10 months in used French oak. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of smoky ash and woodshed*

with no fruit arriving over time. Mid weight plus in style, displaying flavors of blackberry and cassis. Husky, dense and brooding, with daunting tannins. No change when re-tasted several hours after opening. Veers to Syrah in character. 87.

Lingua Franca, Salem, OR

Master Sommelier Larry Stone was a legend in the restaurant business for many years, with stints at Four Seasons, Charlie Trotter's and Rubicon restaurants. He was the first American to win the prestigious Best International Sommelier in French Wines competition in Paris. It seems everyone knew him, including Julia Child and Darrell Corti, and many invited him to lend his talents including André Tchelistcheff and the Coppolas. Despite his impressive resume and notoriety, **Larry remains humble despite his remarkable palate and wine sense.**

Larry left the restaurant business in 2006, became president of Evening Land Vineyards in the Eola-Amity Hills a few years later, leaving in 2012. In 2013, he sold his vast personal wine collection and with the assistance of friends, family, and a major investor, David Honig, acquired a property in the Eola-Amity Hills AVA adjacent to Seven Springs Vineyard.

The inaugural Lingua Franca Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines were produced in 2015 using purchased grapes, with estate-grown bottlings added in 2016 from the 66-acre LfV Estate Vineyard. A modern winery was constructed and completed in 2016. The wines are crafted in consultation with noted Burgundian vigneron Dominique Lafon and by on-site winemakers Thomas Savre and Larry Stone. The vineyard manager is Antoine Petigny-Samuelsan.

Lingua Franca wines have already been placed in prominent Parisian restaurants and have achieved notoriety in the wine press in the U.S. The website, www.linguafranca.wine, offers the Lingua Franca Journal, a unique behind the scenes perspective of the winery. The winery appears in the new movie, 'Somm3.'

The wines are sold exclusively to mailing list and Wine Club members. Starting with the spring 2019 release of the 2017 vintage, a selection of very limited bottlings will be offered only to Wine Club members. Wine Club members also have exclusive access to the winery's new Sommelier For Hire program. The Lingua Franca experience is made available to you in your preferred location. If you are not a member and would like to join or need more information about the winery's Wine Club, inquire at hospitality@linguafranca.wine.

Two of the wines reviewed here are from Mimi Casteel's Vineyard and the third, Hopewell Vineyard, is farmed by Mimi. She is a very intuitive and sensitive farmer working with dwarf sheep herded by llamas, and letting wildflowers grow in the vineyards she farms. Larry says, "The vines yield flavors to her as to no one else."



2015 Lingua Franca Mimi's Mind Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$90. Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of fertile earth, spice, rose petal and black cherry lead off. Very similar to the 2016 vintage, except a little more concentration in a mid weight plus style and seemingly riper dark red and black fruit flavors. More gutsy than the 2016 bottling with muscular tannins that come on with a rush on the succulent-fruited finish. Needs more time in the cellar to integrate and moderate the tannins. **92.**

2016 Lingua Franca Mimi's Mind Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$90. Heritage Pommard vines. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of fertile earth, tobacco and cherry. Discreetly concentrated in a mid weight style featuring red cherry and red berry fruit flavors accented with a savory tobacco note. Backed by fine-grain tannins, the fruit holds on through a slightly astringent finish. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **92.**

2016 Lingua Franca Hopewell Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 340 cases, \$60. Crafted from Dijon clones farmed to exacting standards by Mimi Castell in the hills above the village of Hopewell. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of black cherry, woodland spice, pipe smoke and toasty oak. The middleweight black cherry, boysenberry and black raspberry flavors are very satisfying. Admirable balance, with a compliment of toasty oak in the background and an extended and generous finish. Even better when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with an emerging seductive nose and a memorable finish. **93.**

Fullerton Wines, Beaverton, OR

Owner Eric Fullerton was first introduced to viticulture and winemaking as a 14-year-old boy in Boppard am Rhein, Germany in 1969. In 1997, the Fullerton family moved from Denmark to the Willamette Valley of Oregon where the wines proved inspirational to the Fullerton family. Eric's son, Alex, who had swirled, smelled and tasted wine from a young age, had a serendipitous encounter with Lynn Penner-Ash that enabled Alex to begin his career in wine as a cellar hand for Penner-Ash Wine Cellars for two vintages. Alex and Eric made their first wine together in a garage in 2011. Alex worked a vintage for Josh Bergström of Bergström Wines in 2012 and the same year Fullerton Wines was launched with 350 cases of wine at the new SE Wine Collective.



Today, Fullerton Wines produces 4,500 cases annually of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay sourced from select vineyard partners and the Estate Ivy Slope Vineyard. The winery has three labels: Fullerton single-vineyard

designates of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Five FACES Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and Three Otters Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir Rosé. FACES is an acronym for the five Fullerton family members, Filip, Alex, Caroline, Eric and Susanne (see photo above), and resides on the Five FACES Willamette Valley bottlings. The Fullerton Coat of Arms hails from 13th century Scotland with three otters centrally displayed. These otters serve as the inspiration for the Three Otters label wines.

Vinification is in open-top, closed-top and barrel fermenters, with punch downs for the open-top, pump-overs for the closed-top, and rotation for the barrels. Lots are usually cold soaked for up to 10 days and ambient yeast carry out the primary fermentation. Whole cluster inclusion varies with the lot and can change from 15% to 100%. Some vineyard-designated wine lots undergo extended maceration after fermentation. The vineyard-designates are bottled unfiltered and unfiltered.

For more information and to shop for wines online, visit www.fullertonwines.com. The Fullerton Wine Bar and Tasting Room is located in Portland and is open Wednesday-Sunday.



2016 Three Otters Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.53, \$22. This wine was favorably reviewed in the previous issue in an article about Willamette Valley Pinot Noir wines priced at \$30 or less. Harvest Brix 22.9°-25.1°. Pommard, Wädenswil, and Dijon 113, 114, 115, 667 and 777. Aged in French oak barrels, 5% new, 95% neutral. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Intriguing perfume of black cherry, nut oil, grilling spices and burnt tobacco. Very silky in the mouth with a stylish core of black cherry fruit underlain with a long kiss of oak. A satisfying wine with some finishing persistence. Score: 89.*



2015 Five FACES Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.54, 1,000 cases, \$35. This wine is a blend from the winery's best vineyard sources, showcasing the breadth of terroir in the Willamette Valley. Harvest Brix 22.8°-25.2°. Dijon 113, 114, 667 and 777, and Pommard and Wädenswil clones. 15% whole clusters. Aged in French oak barrels, 20% new with remainder second or third fill or neutral. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Leading the way are pleasant aromas of cherry, strawberry and toasty oak that gain traction over time in the glass. Light to mid weight flavors of dark red cherry, spice and toasty oak combine in charming and easy drinking fashion. A solid value priced wine with a modest, but juicy finish. 90.*



2016 Five FACES Willamette Valley Chardonnay 12.5% alc., pH 3.32, TA 0.56, 300 cases, \$35. A blend of five vineyards reflecting the entire Willamette Valley. Dijon 76, 95, 96, Davis 108 and Wente. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented with ambient yeast over several months at cold temperatures. Full malolactic fermentation. Aged 17 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 10% new. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Attractive aromas of pineapple, ripe pear, kiwi and buttered toast. Rich, ripe, mouth filling flavors of lemon, pineapple and pear with a shading of nutty oak. Viscous in the mouth, with adequate acidity to maintain vigor. 90.*

2015 Fullerton Croft Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.52, 200 cases, \$50. Primarily sedimentary soils. Pommard, Wädenswil and Dijon 115 clones. Harvest Brix 24.5°-25.0°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Forestry aromas of fir tree and underbrush. A rugged and brooding mid weight plus wine showing aggressive tannins that envelope the black fruit core. The fruit does not come to the fore even when tasted several hours after opening. The wine finishes with cotton-mouth tannins. 86.*

2015 Fullerton Fir Crest Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.54, 400 cases, \$55. Marine sedimentary Willakenzie series soils. 30+-year-old Pommard and Dijon 115 clones. Harvest Brix 23.4°-24.4. 30% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 40% new, 45% second fill and 15% third fill. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of cherry, sandalwood, baking spice and a hint of smoke. Light to mid weight in extraction, with straightforward dark red cherry flavor. A little smoky oak plies the background. The modest tannins are well integrated and there is some length on the finish. 89.*

2015 Fullerton Momtazi Vineyard McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.60, 200 cases, \$60. Sedimentary soils, biodynamically farmed vineyard close to the Van Duzer corridor. Harvest Brix 23.9°-24.6°. clones are Dijon 113, 114, 115 and 777. Fully de-stemmed, ambient fermentation, aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is not particularly appealing with oak-driven aromas of char and smoke dominating over time. Earthy and rustic, and even weedy, with a mid weight core of black cherry and black raspberry fruits underlain with mushroom flavor and an overlay of oak. The tannins are a little aggressive and the finish is mildly astringent.* **86.**

2016 Fullerton LUX Willamette Valley Chardonnay 12.5% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.54, 100 cases, \$55. A four barrel selection of fruit from Apolloni, Andreas and Nemarski vineyards. Dijon 76, 95, 96, and Davis 108. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented with ambient yeast over several months at cold temperatures. Full malolactic fermentation and aging 17 months in French oak barrels, 45% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. A sophisticated offering with aromas of lemon peel, green apple, kiwi, and cold steel. Bright flavors of lemon, green apple and pear with a hint of vanilla. An edgy wine with submerged oak and a clean cut of acidity on the lean but quenching finish. This wine lacks the exuberant fruit of the FACES Chardonnay, but is more classy.* **93.**

Van Duzer Vineyards, Dallas, OR

Nestled in the Van Duzer Corridor, the estate vineyard is impacted by oceanic influences, keeping the vines warmer during a cold growing season and cooler during a warm vintage (like 2015) compared to the rest of the Willamette Valley.

The 2015 vintage was characterized by warm and dry weather. A dry, east wind at the end of August created the potential for dehydration in the vineyard, so a targeted watering program was instituted to combat moisture loss while allowing gradual maturation of fruit at an ideal measure of water stress. Fruit was harvested September 26.

Visit the beautiful hospitality center for tasting open every day. the wines may also be purchased through the winery's online store at www.vanduzer.com. See previous issues of the *PinotFile* for the full scoop on this winery.

2016 Van Duzer Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.56, 7,202 cases, \$32. 98% Van Duzer Vineyard. 57% Dijon 113, 114, 115, 667 and 777, 25% Pommard, 18% Wädenswil. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Demure aromas of dark cherry, licorice and oak. A cozy, comforting wine that is cherry fruit driven. Forward drinking and easygoing, albeit a bit shallow.* **87.**

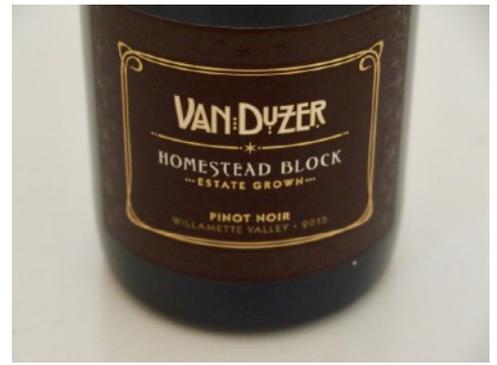
2015 Van Duzer Dijon Blocks Estate Grown Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.61, TA 0.52, 319 cases, \$60. Dijon 777, 113, 115 and 114. 7-day post fermentation maceration. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 45% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of cherry, red berry and a compliment of oak. Silky in the mouth in a cohesive and forward drinking mid weight style, that features darker cherry fruit infused with ripe tannins. Nicely balanced, deft oak management, with a redeeming cherry-driven finish.* **92.**

2015 Van Duzer Westside Blocks Estate Grown Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.46% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.53, 337 cases, \$60. Dijon 777 and 113, Wädenswil, Pommard and Flower. These blocks are exposed to winds funneling through the Van Duzer Corridor and the fruit develops thicker skins, richer color and generous tannins. A barrel selection. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 46% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of dark berries and fertile earth. Highly flavorful with waves of inviting black cherry and boysenberry fruit flavors. Impeccably balanced with integrated tannins, energetic acidity and a big-time finish of excellent length.* **93.**



2015 Van Duzer Homestead Block Estate Grown Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.51, 243 cases, \$60. 100% own-rooted Pommard clone. 10% whole cluster. 8 days of extended maceration. aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The best nose of the three Block Pinot Noirs in this vintage, offering bright aromas of fresh*

cherry, cola and spice. Delicious darker cherry essence that is expansive in the mouth and lingering on the finish. Silky and ephemeral, with righteous oak. Pinot royalty. 94.



2015 Van Duzer Norris-McKinley Vineyard Ribbon Ridge Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., pH 3.67, TA 0.56, 138 cases, \$60. 68% Coury "clone," 17% Dijon 115 and 15% Dijon 667. This vineyard is an estate property planted in Willakenzie soil. 8-day extended post-fermentation maceration. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Deep aromas of black cherry, balsam and toasty oak. Forceful and assertive black cherry fruit backed by firm tannins. Silky in texture with a long, opulent finish. This wine will benefit from decanting if opened now. 91.*



2016 Van Duzer Bieze Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Chardonnay 13.3% alc., pH 3.24, TA 0.74, 283 cases, \$36. This vineyard is adjacent the acclaimed Seven Springs Vineyard. Well-draining Jory soil and a temperate climate. Gentle whole cluster pressed, fermented at low temperatures in 40% concrete tank, 35% in oak barrel with batonnage, and 25% in stainless steel barrels. Aged on the lees for 8 months. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Complex nose featuring aromas of yellow apple, flinty citrus, woodland spice and nut oil. Very gracious and polished on the palate, offering flavors of fresh Honeycrisp apple, pear, pineapple and a hint of caramel. Creamy in texture,*

with a succulent fruit finish of uncommon length. Ostentatious for an Oregon Chardonnay, but so what. 96.

Whole Cluster Inspired Sonoma Coast Wines from Kutch Wines & RAEN Winery

"I like to use whole clusters. I find it adds an extra dimension to the palate and aromas of a wine."

Ted Lemon, Winemaker, Littorai

Regular readers of the *PinotFile* know that I have a special attraction to Pinot Noir crafted with a significant amount of whole cluster. In winemaking, there are no universal approaches and this is what makes wine so interesting, so variable in its expression and so endearing. Proponents of whole cluster fermentation so relish the seductive, spicy, rose petal aromatics, the added flavors, and the soft, silky textures that they often pursue 100% whole cluster inclusion during vinification. Aromatics are the most challenging component of Pinot Noir to capture and whole cluster fermentation can achieve haunting aromatics. Not only that, but older Pinot Noirs made with a percentage of whole cluster can be more aromatically alive and complex. Whole cluster wines, although containing more tannin, tend to be softer than de-stemmed wines due to the increase in pH that stems produce and the contribution of partial carbonic maceration from whole berries.

From a consumer perspective, some New World palates do not find Pinot Noir wines made with significant whole cluster inclusion to be appealing and prefer 100% de-stemmed wines. My counter-argument is many completely de-stemmed Pinot Noir wines taste the same. Opponents of whole cluster wines complain about the "veggie," herbal, green tobacco, snap pea flavors that potentially can arise and be subtle or obvious. The downside from a chemical winemaking perspective, as pointed out by winemaker Ted Lemon, is that stem inclusion increases the pH and decreases the TA compared to a completely de-stemmed wine. "You may, depending on region, vintage and ripeness at picking, have to acidify the resulting wine unless you are comfortable with very high pHs." (Ted Lemon uses a judicious percentage of whole cluster in his Pinot Noir wines). Finally, there is the question of terroir and whether stylistic practices mask it or reveal it.

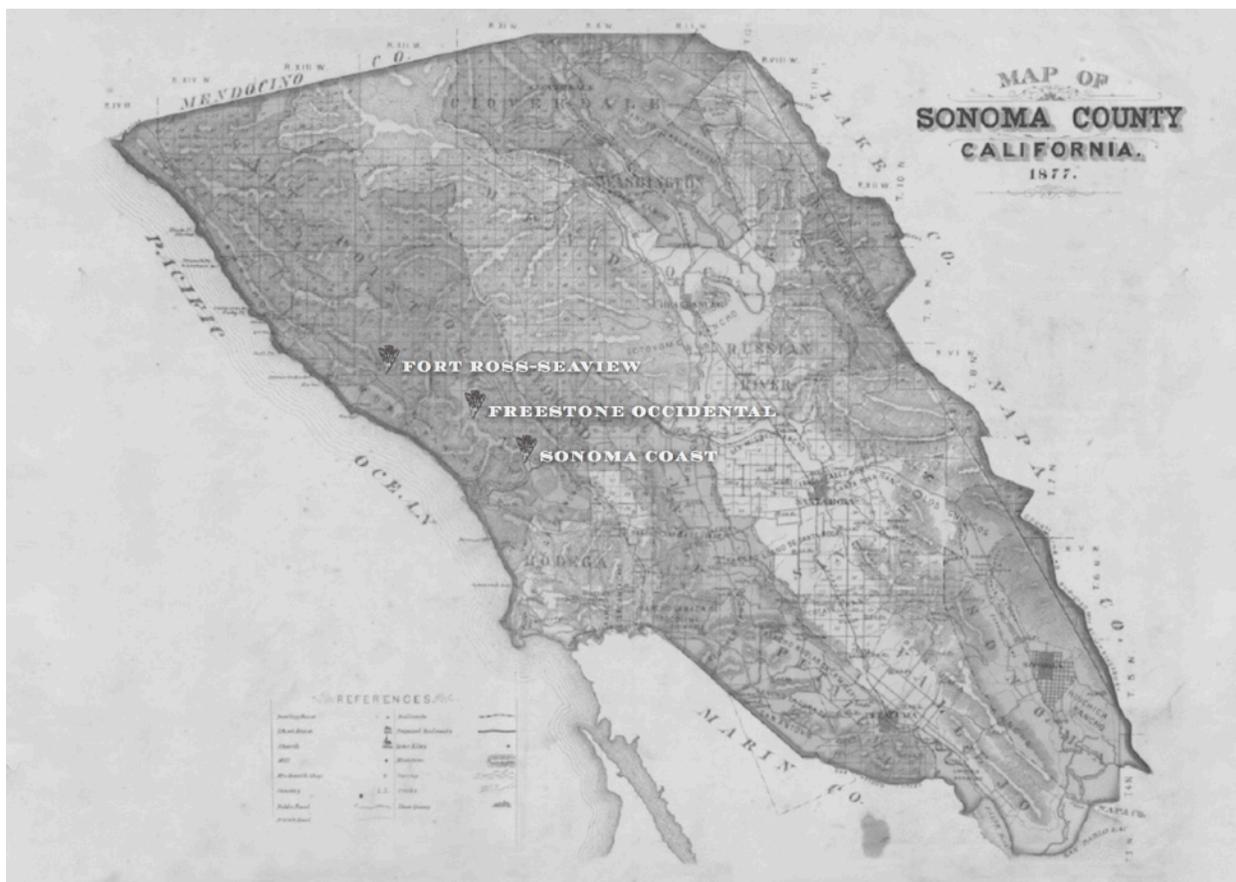
My advice is to line up some 100% whole cluster Pinot Noir wines from Kutch or RAEN or other producers with some 100% de-stemmed Pinot Noir wines, all from the same region and vintage, and taste them blindly. Decide for your self!

Both Kutch and RAEN Pinot Noir wines are fermented whole cluster and aged in neutral (no new) oak.

RAEN

RAEN ("rain") is translated to Research in Agriculture and Enology Naturally. Winemakers Carlo and Dante Mondavi give credit to their grandfather Robert and father Tim who were icons in the California wine business. Tim's passion for Pinot Noir was translated into an inspiration for Carlo and Dante at an early age. The winery was launched with the 2013 vintage.

The winery's Pinot Noirs come from two estate vineyards in the Sonoma Coast and an unnamed 10-acre vineyard deemed "Sonoma Coast.". Freestone Occidental Bodega is the coolest daytime site. Situated at 750 feet elevation, clones 667, Calera and Pommard are planted in Goldridge sandy loam. The Fort Ross-Seaview Home Field Vineyard overlooks the Pacific Ocean north of Jenner. Grapes struggle here to ripen during the growing season. Clone 777 is planted at an elevation of 1,025-1,270 feet. Soils are well-drained iron-rich sandstone of the Franciscan series.



All of the 2017 grapes were picked, fermented and put into barrel before the tragic fires that swept through Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino. RAEN vineyards remained untouched.

2017 was an ideal growing season on the Sonoma Coast. Stormy winter rains replenished the soils, streams and lakes of California, ending five years of drought. The rains gave way to a beautiful spring and bud break returned to a more historical norm. This was followed by a cool, even growing season until mid-August when a series of heat waves arrived. These heat waves moved the final stages of ripening along rapidly. Overall, yields at RAEN were slightly lower than historical averages.

The vintners recommend cellaring the wines for two years or if opened now, decant or open one hour prior to pouring.

RAEN Pinot Noir is available through a mailing list and the RAEN Society Wine Club programs. Tasting is by appointment. A Fort Ross-Seaview Chardonnay from the 35-year-old Charles Ranch is also available. Visit www.raenwinery.com.



2017 RAEN Royal St. George Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., \$60. Named in honor of Dante and Carlo Mondavi's grandfather. A selection of the finest barrels giving a window into the cool westerly hills of the true Sonoma Coast. Clones are Pommard, "828," 667, Calera and rVR1. Goldridge soils. Whole cluster, native fermentation. Aged in neutral French oak barrels. Bottled without fining or filtration. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. A whole cluster-driven nose featuring aromas of cherry, pine sap and burnt tobacco. Very sleek, seamless and sexy, with a mid weight core of black cherry fruit, accented with exotic spices. Good vibrancy and mellow tannins, finishing intense and long with a dark cherry aromatic theme. 94.*



2017 RAEN Home Field Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$80. The winery's most westerly site, 4.8 acres located just under two miles from the Pacific Ocean. Whole cluster, native fermentation. Aged in neutral French oak barrels. Bottled without fining or filtration. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasing aromas of cherry and dark red berries. Elegantly composed, with broad flavors of dark red and purple berries with just the right oak and spice seasoning. Honed tannins and defining acidity fuel the harmony. The finish is gracious and quenching.* **94.**



2017 RAEN Bodega Vineyard Freestone Occidental Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.7% alc., 200 cases, \$90.

This vineyard sits just 4 miles from the coast. Surrounded by redwoods, pines, wildflowers and coastal oaks. Whole cluster, native barrel fermentation. Aged in neutral French oak barrels. Bottled without fining or filtration. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Soaring aromas of fresh cherry, bramble and rose petal. Long in the mouth with a bevy of black cherry, boysenberry, earth and botanical flavors. Impeccably balanced with a seductive finish that seems eternal.* **95.**



Kutch Wines

I have written extensively in *The PinotFile* about the wines of Jamie Kutch. **The wines have been on my annual All-American team several years including 2018.** Kutch Wines was one of my 2017 Wineries of the Year: www.princeofpinot.com/article/2024/. The small production is sold through allocation to a mailing list at www.kutchwines.com.

As you can see from the reviews, the wines in this vintage were all excellent, but the Falstaff Vineyard stood out. Jamie's comments about this vineyard provide insight and he prefaces a description of the vineyard and growers as follows. *"Sir John Falstaff was William Shakespeare's fictional character, a fat knight who was vain, boastful, cowardly and spent most of his time drinking at a bar while living on stolen or borrowed money. Despite these unsavory characteristics, many scholars claim that Falstaff was one of Shakespeare's greatest creations alongside Hamlet and Cleopatra. So, what is so special about a drunken, gluttonous, lazy old man? His appetite! Falstaff not only had a boundless appetite for food and wine, but also for language, laughter, people and life. It is these qualities that I share with Shakespeare's grand character and hope to translate through the wine that shares his name."*

Jamie gives considerable detail about Falstaff Vineyard, something few winemakers share. *"Rudy and Judy Lougheed purchased their 6-acre Falstaff Road property in 1999 with the intention of growing grapes. Ron, a retired chemist, and Judy, a retired microbiologist were passionate wine lovers and had spent many weekends in wine country exploring and imbibing. They planted 5.75 acres to Pinot Noir less than a year after they purchased the property. At the time, there were no other vineyards on Falstaff Road, and now, two decades later there are three, with a fourth likely to be planted soon."*

"The vineyard is located 8 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, just outside the town of Sebastopol. Working with Jim Pratt of Cornerstone Certified Vineyards, they chose to plant three clones of Pinot Noir: "828," 115 and 777. The weather at the vineyard is considerably colder than Burgundy. Lougheed says, "If you want grapes at 25° Brix, you need to go elsewhere. This is a marginal site and ripening is tricky." Falstaff is always the last picked Pinot Noir vineyard for me each season and historically the smallest yielding (< 1 ton-per-acre at times). We have consulted with soil and viticulture scientist Dr. Paul Skinner and instituted techniques to increase crop size and maximize phenolic ripeness."

Jamie continues. *"Ron and Judy Lougheed are the antithesis of Shakespeare's Falstaff. They are humble, thoughtful, and hard working. However, their appetite for growing high quality, great wine and enjoying it alongside mushrooms they have foraged and homemade Pinot Noir jam undeniably harkens back to their vineyard's namesake. I am incredibly fortunate to work with them and their very special fruit."*

The growers:



Jamie's comments on the 2017 vintage. *"2017 was the most compressed vintage of my career. We picked all of our Pinot Noir in only 13 days. The season began with record-setting rainfall, which was much needed after almost five years of drought. This abundance of rain delayed bud break and got the season off to a late start. Soon enough, the skies across Sonoma County began to clear and sunny and warm conditions followed. As flowering started, a variety of weather conditions kept growers on their toes. Late lifting fog, wind and unusual heat spikes required careful attention and quick action in the vineyards. Canopy maintenance was also a top priority as the early rains increased the plants' vigor. Several heat spikes in June continued to drive canopy growth and limited cluster size and weight. What looked like a potentially large crop on the vines turned out to be average to just below average once the fruit was in the winery. August came and went somewhat predictably, but early September brought extreme heat. Temperatures hung in the upper 90s to 100 degrees setting off a fury of picking. McDougall Ranch was harvested August 28, Bohan Vineyard August 20, Bohan Vineyard Graveyard Block September 2, Signal Ridge Vineyard September 7, and Falstaff Vineyard September 9."*



2017 Kutch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 750 cases, \$39. A blend of grapes from McDougall Ranch, Bohan, Falstaff and Le Jons vineyards. Sandstone, Goldridge, Adobe clay and sandy loam soils. 100% whole cluster, native yeast fermentation, fruit crushed and punched down by foot, aged on the lees for 11 months in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Complex nose displaying aromas of cherry, exotic spices, pine sap, tobacco smoke and fertile earth. Excellent vim and vigor in a mid weight style with a gentle mouthfeel, offering flavors of dark red cherry and berry and a subtle savory thread. Sporting the most whole cluster character in the 2017 lineup, this wine is nicely balanced with submerged tannins. The fruit really sang when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A terrific value. 91.*

2017 Kutch Signal Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 12.0% alc., 150 cases, \$Not released. The highest planted vineyard in all of Sonoma and Mendocino County at 2,800 feet. Located just north of the Sonoma Coast AVA and south of the Anderson Valley AVA (essentially an extension of the true Sonoma Coast). 100% whole cluster, native yeast fermentation, fruit crushed and punched down by foot, aged on the lees for 11 months in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Love this nose. The aromas are fresh and invigorating like a morning shower. Woodsy, with notes of fresh crushed grapes, darker red fruits*

and spice. On the palate, the wine has plenty of charming energy, offering flavors of dark red and blue fruits framed by ripe fine-grain tannins that are evident but not drying. Well-crafted with a notably persistent finish. Still gorgeous, perfumed and easy to approach when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **93.**



2017 Kutch McDougall Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 550 cases, \$Not released.

This vineyard is located 3.5 miles from the Pacific Ocean at 935 feet elevation. Farm management is by Ulises Valdez (RIP). Planted in 1998 to clone 114. Soils are Graywacke, sandstone. 100% whole cluster, native fermentation, fruit crushed and punched down by foot, aged on the lees without racking for 11 months in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas of dark cherry, burnt tobacco, woodland spice and bark really draw you into the glass. Seamless in a mid weight style, with flavors of spiced dark red and purple fruits that dance on the palate. More demure in this vintage, with cohesive tannins and an awesome finish displaying echos of aromatic goodness. Superb in every way, and even a little more demonstrative when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **95.***

2017 Kutch Bohan Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.0% alc., 300 cases, \$54. George Bohan farms original vines planted in 1972. The original vines are on their own rootstock and have been always dry farmed. Located at 925 feet elevation, 3.1 miles from the Pacific Ocean on the second ridge inland. Sandstone soil. 100% whole cluster, native fermentation, fruit crushed and punched down by foot, aged on the lees for 11 months in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Captivating aromatic display including pie cherry, strawberry, underbrush, and a hint of burnt tobacco and root beer. Light to mid weight in concentration, offering spirited flavors of cherry, strawberry and spice framed by noticeable, but engaging tannins. This wine is more acid-driven with a modestly high strung, very lengthy finish. A little more lean and savory than the other Pinots in the 2017 lineup, but equally desirable. Even better when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, and probably will be deserving of a higher score after a couple of years in bottle. **92.***



2017 Kutch Bohan Vineyard Graveyard Block Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., 100 cases, \$Not released.

Sourced from a single block within the Bohan Vineyard. Soils here are the rockiest on the ranch and create a distinct wine. 100% whole cluster, native fermentation, aged 11 months without racking on the lees in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of spiced cherry, turned earth and tobacco ash. Light to mid weight in an elegant style, featuring well spiced red fruits with the slightest confected tone. The rocky soil seems to give this wine a distinctive character that defies my best efforts at description. There are noticeable, healthy tannins that provide textural interest. But the most striking feature is the impossibly long finish that is described as "fantastic" in my notes.*

*Considerably more enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle showing demonstrative aromas of spiced cherry, potpourri and sweet pipe smoke. **94.***



2017 Kutch Falstaff Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

12.5% alc., 350 cases, \$64. The coldest site in the Kutch vineyard lineup. Dijon "828," 777 and 115 were planted in 2001 in marine quartz sandstone and Goldridge soil. Vineyard is located at 550 feet elevation, 8.4 miles from the Pacific Ocean on the second ridge inland. The berries are often the size of peas and yields are below 1 ton-per-acre.

100% whole cluster, native fermentation, fruit crushed and punched down by foot, aged 17 months on the lees with out racking in 100% neutral French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The aromas of black cherry, blueberry, spice and sweet mulch really soar over time in the glass. This is the kind of perfume you could dab behind the ears for a pheromone effect. A wine of substance that engages and caresses the palate with flavors of black cherry, blueberry, savory herbs and tobacco. Modest, matching tannins and a really long and juicy finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the nose was dreamy and the overall impression was harmony. I have been to the mountain top and it is good. **97.***



Recently Tasted California Pinot Noir and Chardonnay

Joseph Jewell Wines, Healdsburg, CA

Micah Joseph Wirth and Adrain Jewel Manspeaker pooled their middle names to found this winery beginning with the first commercial vintage in 2007. Micah grew up in Alexander Valley and learned winemaking under the direction of his winemaker father and was mentored at Gary Farrell Winery by winemaker Susan Reed. Adrian was raised in Humboldt County, studied winemaking and viticulture at UC Davis extension program. and learned his practical skills at C. Donatiello Winery and Peay Vineyards.

The winery features Pinot Noir and Chardonnay sourced from stellar vineyards in Humboldt County and Sonoma County. The "home" vineyard is the Starscape Vineyard (formerly known as Floodgate Vineyard), just down the road from the winery's tasting room in Forestville. The vineyard enjoys close company with legendary vineyards such as Kistler and Ritchie. Located at the crook where the Russian River turns west towards the Pacific Ocean, this special spot benefits from the coastal fog that provides cooler evening and early morning temperatures shaping the vibrant acidity the vineyard exhibits. Thirteen different clones of Pinot Noir and five clones of Chardonnay are planted. Joseph Jewell has worked with this vineyard since 2008.

A tasting room offering several tasting options and experiences is open Thursday-Monday in Forestville. The winery's Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are sold on the website at www.josephjewell.com.

I have been reviewing Joseph Jewell wines since the 2009 vintage and the following are **among the best wines I have tasted from this winery**. They are highly recommended.



2015 Joseph Jewell Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.58, 675 cases, \$40. 25% Hallberg Vineyard 777 and Pommard, 50% Starscape Vineyard 777, "828," and Martini, an 25% Bucher Vineyard swan and Pommard. Harvest Brix 23.5°-25.9. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Terrific nose offering aromas of vivid cherry, raspberry, spice and subtle toast. Thoroughly satisfying in a mid weight style featuring flavors of black cherry, blackberry and spice with a deft touch of oak in the background. Notable mid palate and finishing intensity, with gracious tannins. A charming AVA wine. 92.*



2015 Joseph Jewell Starscape Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.61, 200 cases, \$48. Clone 777 planted in 2000. Harvest Brix 24.1°. 15% whole cluster. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. Unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of black fruits, molasses and toasty oak. Dense, bold and slightly withdrawn in a mid weight plus style featuring well ripened fruit flavors of blackberry and blueberry-pomegranate. Big but not too big with plenty of vigor and a sleek mouthfeel. Typical of Martini clone. When tasted several hours after opening, the nose had come alive with more fruit appeal and the wine showed more polish, class and concentration. 94.*



2015 Joseph Jewell Starscape Vineyard Old Girls-Martini Clone Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.63, 75 cases, \$65. Vines planted in 1971. 0.9 tons per acre. Harvest Brix 24.1°. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. Unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas and flavors of ripe, sweet black fruits in a full-bodied, rustic style with noticeable but not aggressive tannins. Luscious and creamy on the palate, with good harmony, integrated oak and good finishing purpose. When tasted several hours later from a previously opened bottle, the aromatics were more giving of black cherry and spice, the flavors of purple and black fruits had come to the front and the wine was considerably more appealing. 92.*

2015 Joseph Jewell Russian River Valley Chardonnay 12.9% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.59, 235 cases, \$N/A. 50% sourced from Starscape Vineyard Wente clone and 50% from Shiloh Hill Vineyard clone 4. Harvest Brix 22.2°-24.2°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of lemon, pineapple, kiwi and banana. Silky in the mouth with discrete richness, offering a*

core of citrus fruit, integrated acidity and a subtle touch of woody oak in the background. Nothing to criticize but nothing to excite. **89**.

2015 Joseph Jewell Starscape Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 13.8% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.61, 100 cases, \$42. Clones are Wente and 15. Harvest Brix 22.2°. Barrel fermented and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. More appealing overall than the RRV AVA bottling with inviting aromas of lemon, apple and a hint of flint. More weight on the palate than the RRV AVA Chardonnay, but not the exuberant fruitiness associated with many RRV Chardonnays. Sleek in texture, with good acidity and a slight saltiness married to the citrus fruits.* **93**.

Neely, Portola Valley, CA

Proprietor Dr Kirk Neely offers Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Spring Ridge Vineyard. The vineyard is situated within a large parcel owned by Kirk and his spouse Holly Myers at the northern boundary of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Jim and Bob Varner began planting the Spring Ridge Vineyard in 1980. They started with Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer, adding 7 acres of Pinot Noir clones 115 and 777 in 1997 and grafted over the Gewürztraminer to Pinot Noir clone 777 in 2006.



Bob became the winemaker for Varner Estate and Foxglove wines as well as Neely wines. Jim took over sales and marketing of the wines. Bob retired in 2015 and Shalini Sekhar became the winemaker. She has an impressive background, having worked at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, Williams Selyem, Copain Custom Crush, Bluxome Street Winery, ROAR and made wines for Furthermore and Waits-Mast. In 2015, she was named Winemaker of the Year at the San Francisco International Wine Competition for her work with Furthermore.

The small bi-level indoor-outdoor winery and cellar located on the property was completed in 2000. Because the vineyard and winery are located in a Preserve in Portola Valley, the winery cannot have a tasting room, accept visitors, or conduct events, and thus remains largely hidden from the public eye. That said, the wines have received considerable notoriety.

Several distinct blocks have been identified: Hidden Block and Picnic Block for Pinot Noir and Home Block, Amphitheater Block and Bee Block for Chardonnay. A new phase of vineyard planting has begun.

The Neely wines are available on the winery website at www.neelywine.com. Three subscription wine club formats are also available.

2015 Neely Spring Ridge Vineyard Picnic Block Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$42. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, underbrush and tobacco lead to a savory mid-weight wine offering fruit flavors of black cherry and black raspberry with a flourish of oak in the background. Very botanical, with matched tannins and juicy acidity. More appealing fruit came to the forefront when tasted several hours later from a previously opened bottle. **90.**

2015 Neely Spring Ridge Vineyard Upper Picnic Block Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$42. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of fertile earth and toasty oak. Considerably more fruity on the palate in a mid weight plus style with vivid flavors of cherry and raspberry. Oak plays a supporting role and gracious tannins make for easy drinking. When tasted several hours later from a previously opened bottle, the fruit was more giving and the finish had gained pedigree. **92.**

2015 Neely Spring Ridge Vineyard Hidden Block Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$38. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Inviting perfume of black cherry, cassis, boysenberry and rose petal. The flavors echo the aromas in a mid weight plus style with a dusting of earth and oak. Very polished and seamless, with tannins that are almost imperceptible. **92.**



Samuel Louis Smith

A micro-negotiant based in Salinas that is focused on some of the coolest and most compelling terroirs of the Central Coast. Coastal mountainous sites and organic winegrowing are the tenets of the brand. Established in 2014, Samuel Louis Smith original focused on the Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir, but the brand has shift its focus to Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay, Monterey Pinot Noir and Santa Cruz Mountains Syrah.

Samuel trained with stints under Doug Margerum in Santa Barbara and Francois Villard in the Northern Rhône and is now the head winemaker at Morgan Winery. Samuel Louis Smith winery produces about 400 cases annually. Visit www.samuellouiswines.com to join the mailing list to acquire the wines.

2017 Samuel Louis Smith Albatross Ridge Vineyard Monterey Pinot Noir 12.7% alc., pH 3.62, 146 cases, \$44. Albatross Ridge is perched at the top of Laureles Grade at an elevation of 1,250 feet and seven miles from Monterey Bay. The site pushes the limit for winegrowing: windy is constant from the Carmel coast, degree days are minimal, and resulting yields are usually less than two tons-per-acre. 35% whole cluster. Native primary and secondary fermentation. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Appealing aromas of black cherry and raspberry that sustain over time in the glass. The friendly mid weight core of black cherry and raspberry fruit flavors have impressive mouth filling intensity. A captivating wine full of good cheer, with superb balance and a lengthy finish.* **93.**



Screen Door Cellars, Calistoga, CA

Winemaker Bobby Donnell and his viticulturist spouse Shannon Donnell produce small amounts of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Rosé and Chardonnay. The first vintage was 2012. Four of their Pinot Noir wines since 2013 have scored 94 or above in the *PinotFile*. The wines are sold on the website at www.screendoorcellars.com.

2015 Screen Door Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 200 cases, \$50. Released December 1, 2017. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. A wave of perky aromas from the get-go include dark red cherry, dark red raspberry, baking spices and mocha. Tasty core of dark red Bing cherry with added notes of spice and cola. Satiny in the mouth, with a cherry-driven finish. Oak stands out in the background. 91.*

2016 Screen Door Cellars Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 100 cases, \$50. Released December 1, 2018. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved, but pleasant aromas of dark, very ripe fruits and cola. The dark cherry, blackberry and pomegranate fruit has a roasted quality and a bit of prune chimes in. The tannin and acid balance is spot on and the wine offers some lingering fruit on the finish, but toasty oak plays a significant role in the ultra ripe flavor profile. 89.*

2016 Screen Door Cellars Roan Family Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 50 cases, \$65. Release February 1, 2019. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of red cherry, red cranberry, baking spice and sandalwood lead to a lighter weighted wine fashioned in an elegant style, displaying red cherry and red berry fruit flavors. The gossamer tannins make for a sleek texture. The oak regimen sticks out a bit. 91.*

2016 Screen Door Cellars Leras Family Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 50 cases, \$65. Release February 1, 2019. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lovely perfume of black cherry, dark strawberry and botanical aromas. Delicious essence of fresh black cherry with a hint of spice and toasty oak in the background. Sleek and seamless in the mouth, with a stellar finish that harkens another sip. 93.*



Sojourn Cellars, Sonoma, CA

Sojourn is a highly acclaimed winery specializing in Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Fruit is sourced from vineyards in both Sonoma and Napa counties. Winemaker Erich Bradley directs farming operations and crafts the wines along with associate winemaker Randy Bennett.

I have reviewed vintages dating back to 2008, and always found the wines consistently excellent.

The 2017 vintage endured tragic wildfires on October 8-9. All of Sojourn's Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes were picked prior to the fires so there was no impact on the wines. The Sojourn Pinot Noirs in this vintage are all forward-drinking but lack the concentration of the previous two vintages.

The winery's Tasting Salon is open by appointment in downtown Sonoma. Visit www.sojourncellars.com.

2017 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.62, 1,025 cases, \$69. Release spring 2019. Clones "828," 115 and 667. A portion of clone "828" was fermented with stems and blended in, for an overall rate of 10% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation, aged in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is quite earthbound, offering scents of clay, compost, dusty earth and iron along with blackberry fruit. Flavors of very ripe blueberry and blackberry with a hint of allspice, framed by modest tannins. Nicely composed with a generous finish, but doesn't emote like Gap's bottling usually does. 90.*

2017 Sojourn Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.60, 850 cases, \$59. Release spring 2019. This vineyard is located on Roberts Road at the western base of Sonoma Mountain. Clones 115, 777, and a Swan selection. Native yeast fermentation, aged in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Agreeable aromas of black cherry, spice, dark red rose petal and toast. Light to mid weight in style, with appealing elegance. Flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and spice are overshadowed at this early stage by lavish, toasty oak. Silky in the mouth, with a modest but satisfying finish.* **90.**

2017 Sojourn Rodgers Creek Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.60, 800 cases, \$48. Release spring 2019. This vineyard is located high on a ridge in the heart of the Petaluma Gap. Pommard is the foundation and some of it was fermented whole cluster. Some 777 clone as well. Native yeast fermentation. Aged in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of plum, black cherry, purple grape, blueberry and toast. Mid weight in extraction, with benevolent flavors of blue and purple fruits with an infusion of spice. The tannins are reserved, the oak is well integrated, and the fruit-driven finish has legs.* **92.**

2017 Sojourn Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.57, 575 cases, \$69. Release spring 2019. This vineyard is situated at 1,200 feet elevation just inland from the Pacific Ocean near the coastal town of Annapolis. The maritime climate here creates an extreme growing microclimate that requires precise viticulture. Clones 113, 115 and "828." Native yeast fermentation, 100% malolactic fermentation, and aged in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas arrive instantly and persist in the glass, including dark red cherry and berry and fertile earth. As typical with this vineyard, the wine sports a bold core of succulent black raspberry and plummy fruit. There is an appealing earthiness as well and the oak is well integrated. The tannins are reserved, making for easy up front drinking.* **93.**



2017 Sojourn Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.64, 625 cases, \$38. Release spring 2019. Old Wente clone and 95 clone from several vineyard sites. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented with lees stirring during the first three months of fermentation and aging. Malolactic fermentation complete. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. and blended to create a winemaker's cuvée. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Fragrant with aromas of citrus, white peach, crème brûlée and white flower blossoms. Moderately rich, with ripe flavors of yellow peach and pear. There is enough of a spark of acidity to offset the boisterous fruit, and oak blends in nicely.* **92.**



2017 Sojourn Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.47, TA 0.67, 400 cases, \$45. Release spring 2019. Clone 95 from Sangiacomo Roberts Road vineyard and Old Wente clone from Sangiacomo Vella Ranch and Green Acres. Whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented, native yeast fermentation, aged in French oak barrels, 30% new. Bottled unfiltered. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The aromas of lemon oil, pineapple, apple and pastry creme draw you into the glass. The lovely flavors of lemon and pineapple are engaging. This sophisticated wine has a soothing texture, a foxy crispness, and a persistent, lip-smacking finish. A spirited, gorgeous wine!* **95.**

Three Sticks, Sonoma, CA

Three Sticks is a boutique, family-owned winery led by Director of Winemaking, Bob Cabra known for his previous success at Williams Selyem. Founded in 2002, the winery is named for owner William S. Price III's surfing nickname. "Billy Three Sticks" as a name given to him in his youth as reference to the Roman numerals that follow his name. Three Sticks is part of the Price Family Vineyards & Estates (PFVE), a portfolio of premium vineyards and wineries owned by Bill Price - www.pfve.com.

Winemakers Ryan Prichard and Ashley Holland work closely with Bob Cabral in crafting the Three Sticks wines. The 2016 vintage Pinots reviewed are very similar in style, with well-ripened fruit and a generous oak imprint, but vineyard differences still show through.

The Prices purchased the historic Vallejo-Casteñada Adobe (built in 1842) in the town of Sonoma and embarked on a two-year preservation project. The historic landmark is now home to the hospitality of Three Sticks. Tasting is by appointment: concierge@threestickswines.com.

The Three Sticks portfolio consists of Appellation Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Single-Vineyard Designated Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Cuvée Selections, and Adobe Selections (more reasonable wines for visitors to the Adobe). Grapes are sourced from the Sonoma Coast, Sonoma Mountain, Russian River Valley and Sonoma Valley appellations. Estate vineyards include Durell, Gap's Crown, Walala, Alana and William James.

The wines are available via personal allocations and through distribution to select restaurants and fine wine shops in 22 states. Visit www.threestickswines.com. Some large formats are available.

2016 Three Sticks Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.61, 430 cases, \$70. Released August 14, 2018. Soil is volcanic, rocky loam. Clones 667, 115, 777, 943 and Swan selection. 25% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 57% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose offers a pleasing marriage of black cherry fruit and oak-driven toast aromas. A tide of vivid black cherry, blueberry and blackberry fruits roll over the palate and end with relish. Mid weight in style, with lavish oak -driven flavors of toast, spice and dark chocolate. I am not a big fan of noticeable oak, but somehow it works in this wine.* **93.**

2016 Three Sticks Gaps Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.70, 485 cases, \$70. Released August 14, 2018. An estate vineyard owned and farmed by Price Family vineyards & Estates, acquired in 20123. 138.6 planted acres, 80% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay. Vineyard is located on the western slope of Sonoma Mountain at an elevation of 300 to 800 feet. The soil is well-drained loam and clay loam. Clones in this wine are "828," 115, a Swan selection and a Rochioli selection of Pommard clone. 24% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 52% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of black fruits, fertile earth and mulch. A flood of eye-popping, dark purple and blackberry fruits greets the palate. Oak is evident upon opening, but integrates nicely when the wine was tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. The tannins are gracious, the texture is plush and seamless, and the finish is fruit-saturated. Not quite as big as the Walala Vineyard bottling, but still desirable.* **93.**



2016 Three Sticks Walala Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.67% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.63, 188 cases, \$70. Released August 14, 2018. A Price Family Vineyards & Estates Estate vineyard, acquired in 2015. 17.2 acres of Pinot Noir perched atop a ridge near Annapolis, only a few miles from the Pacific Ocean. Clones "828," 777 and 115. 25% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 61% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but agreeable aromas of black fruits, toast and a hint of floral perfume. Initially, this wine is very tight and closed becoming considerably more approachable after opened several hours and spectacular the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Great harmony in a mid weight plus style, featuring hedonistic black current and black grape flavors that are quite ripe but not too ripe. The texture is soothing, the oak is honorable and the preposterous finish goes on and on.* **95.**



2016 Three Sticks Cuvée Eva Marie Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.60, 220 cases, \$90. Released August 14, 2018. One Sky Vineyard is an estate vineyard planted, owned and farmed by Price Family Vineyards & Estates. 1,400 feet elevation. Soils are Gouling cobbly clay loam with excellent drainage. Mix of heritage and Dijon clones including Calera selection, Swan selection, Dijon 943, 777 and 115. 21% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 57% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose is oak-dominated with added aromas of black cherry and black raspberry. Mid weight plus in style, with a charming core of dark red and black cherry fruit flavors with lavish oak in the background. The most elegantly styled of the 2016 Three Sticks Pinots, but the one with the most appealing energy.* **92.**

2016 Three Sticks Alana Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.25, TA 0.73, 110 cases, \$75. Alana is an estate 5-acre vineyard nestled amongst the old redwoods of the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Vineyard planted in 2010 in Goldridge fine sandy loam. Wente clone. Aged 15 months in

French oak barrels, 27% new. *Moderate golden yellow color with some spritz initially in the glass. Shy citrus and yellow apple fruit aromas are embellished with notes of caramel and ginger. Weighty, ripe, lemon and pineapple flavors with oak-driven notes of toast and coconut. Expansive in the mouth and slightly viscous in texture, with an assertive sweet-fruited finish that exudes ripeness.* **90**,

2016 Three Sticks Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.3% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.63, 675 cases, \$55. Released August 14, 2018. Old Wente, Hyde, Mt. Eden and Dijon 76. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Complex nose with assorted aromas including lemon, white peach, petrichor, crushed seashells and the slightest matchstick. Lovely, rich flavors of lemon, pineapple and pear with a spryness in the mouth that is appealing. Commendable oak management and balance, with a welcome sleek, satiny texture.* **92**.

More Wines



2015 Chalone Vineyard Heritage Vines Estate Grown Chalone Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 1,500 cases, \$35. Vineyard is located at 1,800 feet near the Pinnacles National Park within Monterey County. Soils are sparse and underlain with limestone. Aged in French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of blackberry jam, raisin, and cola. There is some apple core aroma initially (volatile acidity) that blows off in the glass. More agreeable on the palate, with full-bodied flavors of blackberry, black current and boysenberry with a hint of flower blossom. The texture is wholesome, the tannins are modest, oak is well integrated, and the wine flows nicely.* **89**.



2016 Goldenrod Flower Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$35. Clean Label Project Certified. The Clean Label Project is an unbiased, science-based nonprofit educating consumers about quality in consumer products on the market today. *Moderate light garnet color in the glass. A savory nose offers scents of earthy flora and seasoned oak barrel. The wine is more appealing on the palate with tasty mid weight fruit flavors of purple grape and boysenberry. Silken in texture, with matching, supportive tannins, and a modest but sufficient finish.* **89**.

2016 Kukeri Lakeville Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.62, 175 cases, \$42, screw cap. Double Gold 2019 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. 100% Martini clone. 100% destemmed. 3-day cold soak, fermented with 'prise de mousse' yeast. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of well-ripened black fruits along with notes of fertile earth, spice, boysenberry and raisin. Creamy in the mouth in a mid weight style with discretely concentrated fully-ripened purple and black fruit flavors with a dark cocoa and dark milk chocolate tone typical of the Martini clone. Subtle, oak-driven marzipan flavor plies the background. The wine's balance is spot on and the finish is long and generous.* **91**.

2017 Larkspur Dundee Oregon Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$14.27. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The flavors supersede the aromas of wooded path, forest and reserved red cherry. Light to mid weight in style, featuring oak-kissed flavors of cherry, red raspberry, and cranberry with a sidecar of tobacco. Well-balanced tannins and zippy acidity with a decent fruity finish.* **87**.

2016 Poppy Monterey County Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$14.27. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of old barrique and smoldering campfire. Mid weight flavors of black cherry and oak-driven tobacco and toast. A simple quaff, with mild tannins and a modest cherry-driven finish.* **86**.

2017 Say When Wine RASI Ranch La Vina Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 200 cases, \$45, screw cap. Aged 10 months in 1 to 4-year-old French oak barrels. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of red cherry, sandalwood and burnt tobacco lead to a mid weight styled wine with flavors of red cherry and red berry. Elegant in demeanor with flavors of grape, black cherry and tobacco framed by gracious tannins. A hint of nutty oak plies the background. The wine displayed a little more fruit intensity when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **89**.

2017 Say When Wine When Spanish Springs Vineyard Arroyo Grande Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 200 cases, \$40, screw cap. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Shy aromas of crushed red cherries and toasty oak. Light in weight, even shallow, with demure flavors of red cherry and red raspberry. Delicate tannins and redeeming*

balance with a modest finish. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **88.**



2017 Say When SŌNĀ VINO Sierra Madre Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay 14.5% alc., 50 cases, \$35, screw cap. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of buttered toast, crème brûlée, pineapple and a hint of matchstick. More appealing on the palate, with flavors of lemon, pineapple, apple and pear. Rich and robust, with fully-ripened flavors, and a viscous mouthfeel. Caliesque in style. **90.***

2016 VIE North Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.71, 200 cases, \$35. Winemaker Bryan Kane sources grapes from a selection of vineyards throughout the North Coast that utilize organic and sustainable farming practices. Clones 151, 667, 777 and "828." Indigenous yeast fermentation. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. This wine has a ripe, roasted fruit profile. Aromas of dark red, purple and black fruits, prune, marzipan and tobacco lead to a middleweight styled wine with flavors that echo the aromas. Plush in the mouth with noticeable nutty oak, modest tannins and a sweet-fruited finish with a noticeable cut (? acidified). Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **87.***

2016 VIE Canihan Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.74, 100 cases, \$50. Canihan Vineyard was first planted in 1998 and field grafted to Dijon clones 115, 667, 777 and "828." Vineyard is farmed organically and dry-farmed. Yields are seldom more than 2 tons per acre. Indigenous yeast fermentation, aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Ultra ripe aromas and flavors of the darkest fruits with oak-driven marzipan in the background. Plush in the mouth, with modest fine-grain backing tannins and a very sweet-fruited finish of good length. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. The fruit is too ripe for my taste. **86.***

2016 The Winery SF North Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 300 cases, \$29.99. Winemaker Bryan Kane. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of dark red fruits and nutty oak. Discretely concentrated black cherry and blueberry flavors with moderately firm tannins, a hint of oak and a sweet-fruited finish. The oak rises up over time and quite noticeable when the wine was tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **88.***



2016 The Winery SF Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 100 cases, \$40. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of earth-kissed black cherry and walnut lead to a mid weight plus styled wine driven by black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors. The fruit is well-ripened but not overripe. Creamy in texture, with a sweet-fruited finish of good generosity and length. Even more appealing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **90.***

Pinot Briefs

Sextant Wines Acquires Old Edna Township I have not visited Old Edna since 2006 when my wife and I spent two nights at the Suite Edna B&B operated by Pattea Torrence who had owned the Edna Valley property since 2002. This lovingly restored farmhouse dates to 1908. The original stagecoach road that linked San Luis Obispo and Pismo Beach runs through the property. I read today that Sextant Wines and proprietors Nancy and Craig Stoller arrived in Edna Valley in 2009 and operated a tasting room here. The Stollers had purchased the adjacent vineyard in 2007. They were able to acquire the entire Old Edna Township on January 7, 2019, and plan to preserve and renovate the property. They want to have people visit the property and stay in one of the guest houses on the property. Visit www.sextantwines.com or www.olderdna.com.

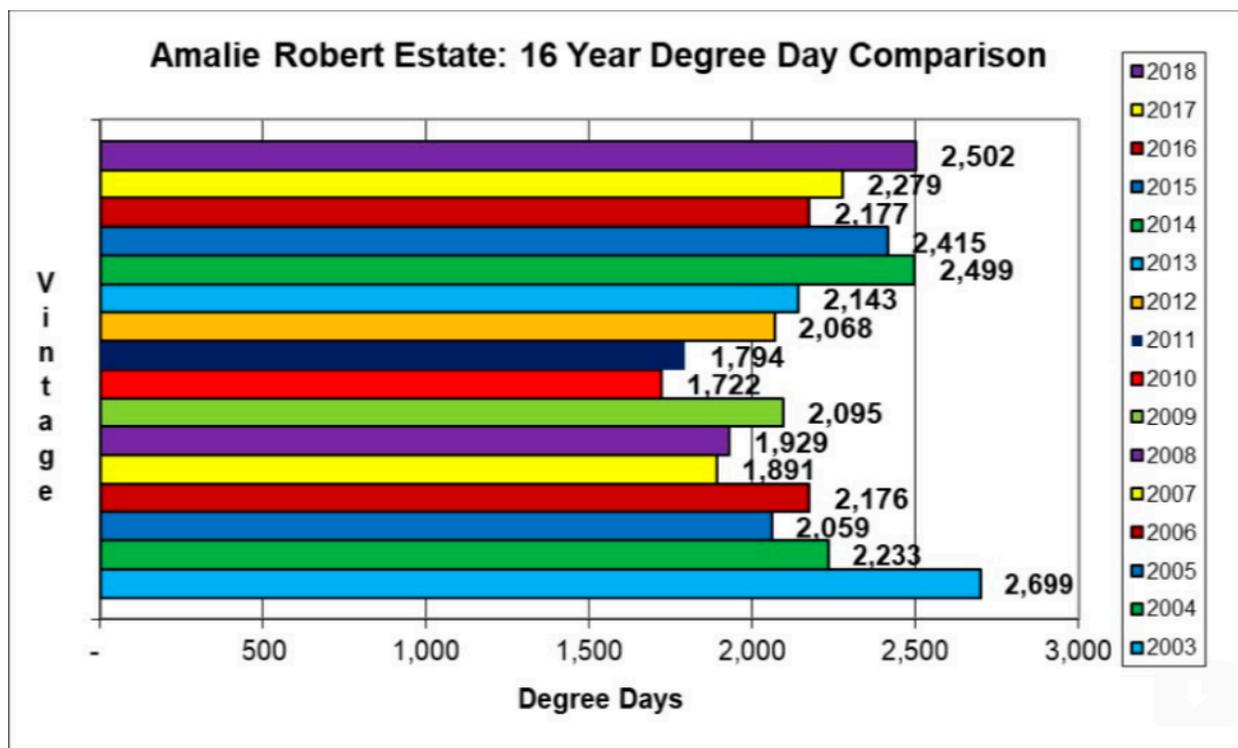
Moshin Vineyards Celebrates 30th Anniversary in the Russian River Valley Moshin Winery has been led by winemaker Rick Moshin since 1989. The winery will celebrate this milestone with a year's worth of events at its Westside Road estate. The winery is participating for the first time in the World of Pinot Noir and the International Pinot Noir Celebration as well as Healdsburg's Pigs & Pinot. On the last Sunday night of each month in 2019, Moshin's tasting room will host open-house receptions with some dates introducing the latest works of local Sonoma County artists. Moshin Vineyards specializes in single-vineyard and estate-blended Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, but also produces Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, Merlot and Zinfandel. Visit www.moshinvineyards.com.

Amcor's EASYPEEL Capsule A new capsule design uses a one-piece aluminum capsule engineered to open wine bottles along a clean line every time. Users place a knife from an opener at a point indicated on the capsule and peel back to create a clean and consistent opening. The result is aesthetically pleasing.



Pinot Noir Prices Tops At the North Bay Business Wine Industry Conference in 2018, it was reported that In Sonoma County, the wine grape variety Pinot Noir continues to drive the bus, with an average grape price of about \$4,000 per ton.

Amalie Robert Estate Winery in the Willamette Valley 2018 Harvest Update Ernie Pink gives a detailed summary and a humorous up-close look at harvest and the 2018 vintage in his Amalie Robert Estate Farming Blog, aka FLOG, at www.amalierobert.blogspot.com. As you can see by the 16-Year Degree Day Comparison, 2018 was as Ernie says, “Dry, dry, dry as a popcorn flatulent.” Not since the 2003 vintage (2,699 degree days) and the 2014 vintage (2,499 degree days) has the growing season been so intolerable.



Oregon 2017 Wine Industry Census The Oregon Wine Board released its Oregon Vineyard and Winery Report in September of 2018. 2017 saw an increase of 44 wineries and an increase in vineyards from 1,144 in 2016 to 1,052 in 2017. The North Willamette Valley still leads with 637 vineyards, 19,705 acres planted, and 491 wineries. Production in tons for Pinot Noir in 2017 was 53,457, an increase of 16.6% with Pinot Gris second (13,786 tons, an increase of 1.4%) and Chardonnay third (an increase of 33.3% to 5,812 tons). Export sales were led by Canada (49 percent of exported Oregon wine) and the UK, with increasing exportation to Japan.

Greg Jones Interview at SipNorthwest.com Greg Jones, a climatologist and director of the Evenstad Center for Wine Education at Linfield College was interviewed recently at www.sipnorthwest.com/greg-jones-climate-change-wine/. He pointed out that water availability is a growing issue in many regions. Heat stress is also concerning especially during fruit ripening. Another concern is the movement of diseased plant material into regions where the climate is now more conducive to spread. He described some interesting research to trick the vine to ripen fruit later by removing the majority of leaves before flowering. This has the potential to delay ripening into a cooler period of the summer.

The Prince Now on TastingBook.com TastingBook is the world’s largest wine information source. There are over 11,000 wine professionals presented in TastingBook. tastingbook.com had over 55 million page views since 2016! Visit my Pro-page and tasting notes at www.tastingbook.com/pro/prince_pinot.

Pinot Palooza This consists of daylong events held in eight cities across Australia and New Zealand plus Hong Kong, Tokyo and Singapore and is considered the world’s largest Pinot Noir festival. The touring event features a tasting of Pinot Noir from local producers as well as ones from New Zealand, America, France and Italy. In 2019, it will be held in May-December. Visit www.pinotpalooza.com.au.

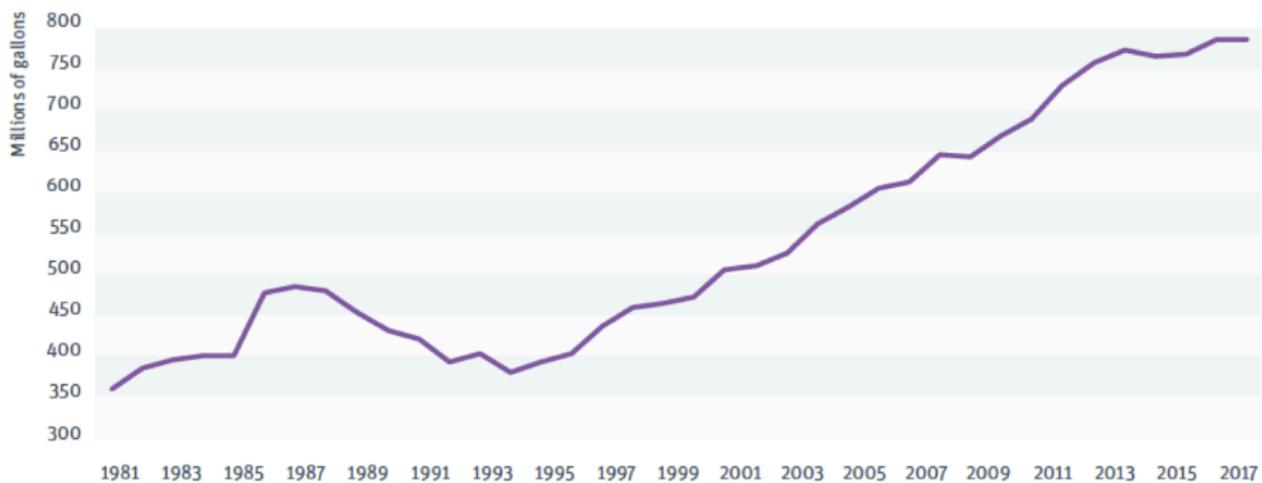


DTC Sales of Wine Hits New Record The winebusiness.com reported that in 2018, consumers spent \$3 billion on DTC wine shipments reflecting a 12% annual growth. Over 6 million cases of wine were shipped in 2018, reflecting a 9% annual growth. The top winery regions by volume growth were Sonoma, Oregon and Washington. Sonoma County has overtaken Napa County with the most wine shipped by volume. 10% of off-premise retail wine is shipped direct to consumers.

Total U.S. Wine Market Tops \$70 Billion According to the *Wine Analytics Report*, January 2019, the total U.S. wine market came to 408 million cases and has doubled in value since 2003. Of the 408 million total cases sold in 2018, a little more than 331 million were sold off-premises and 77 million were sold on-premise. Imports account for 26% of the total cases by volume and 33% of the market's total value. The trend of premiumization continued through 2018 and is expected to carry on through 2019.

U.S. Wine Consumption Through the Years

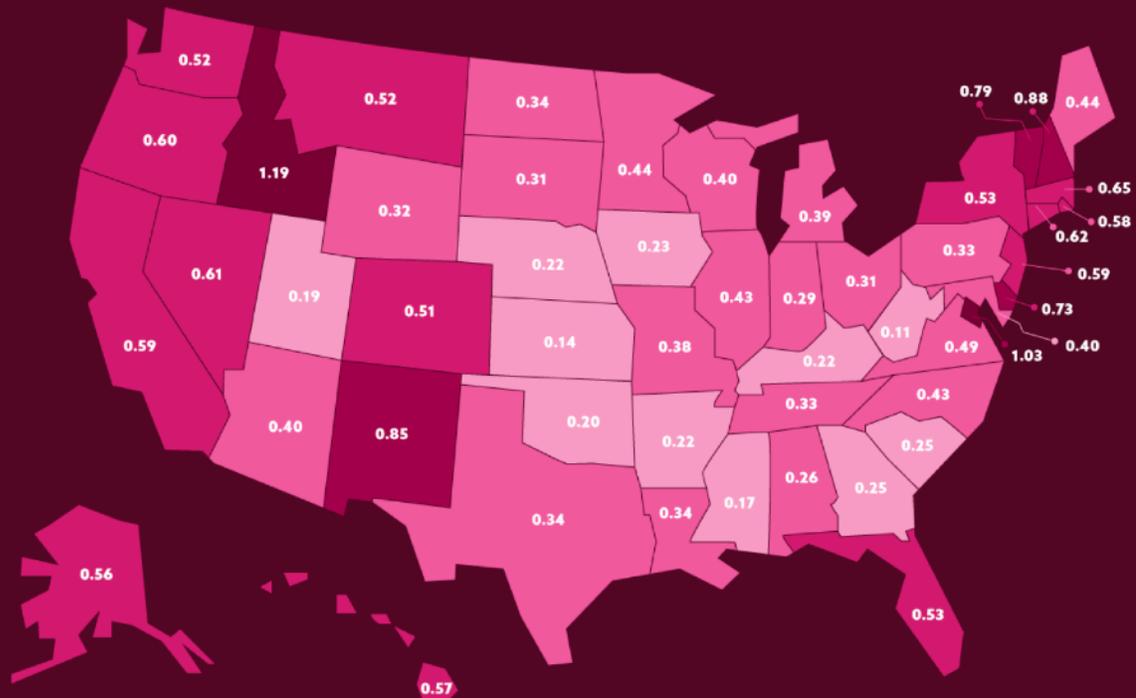
Figure 1: US wine consumption
Volume



Sources: California Wine Institute, Gomberg-Frederickson, BW 166

States That Drink the Most Wine States with the most wine consumption per capita include Idaho, Washington D.C., New Hampshire, New Mexico and Vermont. Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The States That Drink the Most Wine Per Capita



MAP KEY (wine consumption per capita)



STATES WITH MOST WINE CONSUMPTION PER CAPITA

1. Idaho
2. Washington DC
3. New Hampshire
4. New Mexico
5. Vermont

STATES WITH LEAST WINE CONSUMPTION PER CAPITA

1. West Virginia
2. Kansas
3. Mississippi
4. Utah
5. Oklahoma

Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Surveillance Report #110

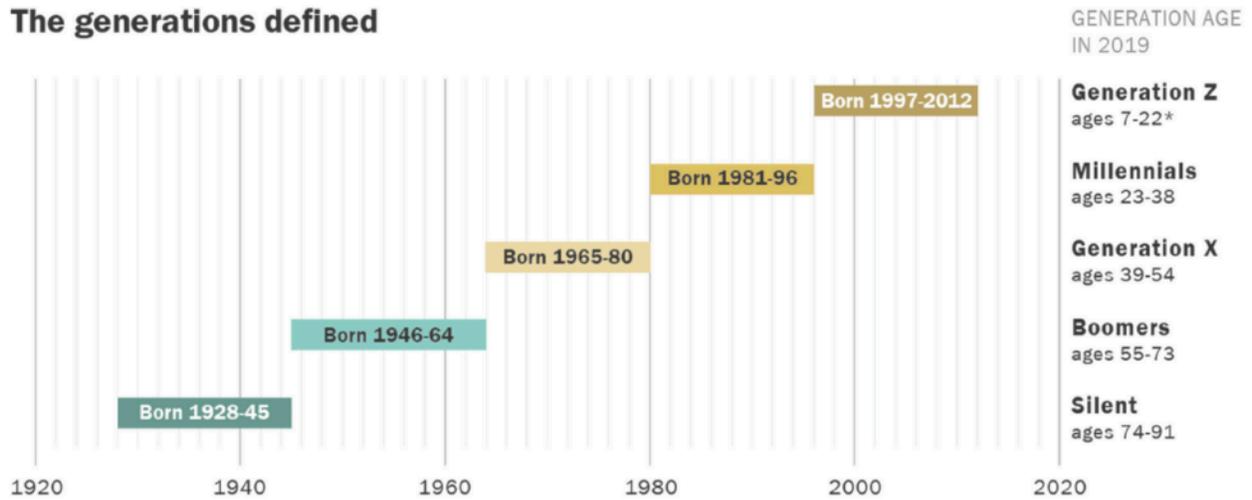
VINEPAIR

State of the Industry Report 2019

Silicon Valley Bank recently published its 2019 outlook. Forecasts included: (1) Millennials are not embracing wine consumption as many had predicted due at least in part to cannabis legalization and a cumulative negative health message surrounding alcohol (see charts below); (2) Baby boomers still lead in total wine purchases but are declining in numbers and per capita consumption; (3) Both volume and dollar sales are expected to end lower than 2018 and growth of the premium wine segment will be roughly flat from the 2018 sales growth estimate; (4) Bottled imports will take additional market share from U.S. producers; (5) overall retail pricing should be flat for premium wine; (6) Oregon will be the bright spot regionally as consumers continue to find good value in the region's offerings. Visit www.svb.com/wine-report/ for the full report.

On a related note, Dan Leese, co-founder and CEO of V2 Wine Group, spoke out about the increasing challenge for smaller producers to bring wines to consumers. The top nine suppliers have an almost 70 percent share of the U.S. wine volume. Meanwhile, there has been an explosion in wineries across the U.S. from 1,800 in 1985 to 9,872 in 2015.

The generations defined



*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group. For this analysis, Generation Z is defined as those ages 7 to 22 in 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

AVERAGE WINE CONSUMPTION BY AGE GROUP

While baby boomers are showing longer-than-expected buying strength and still hold the largest market share of wine consumption, millennials are disappointing expectations by not growing their share of the market as wine consumers.



State of the Wine Industry Report 2019, figure 16
Sources: 2014-2018 SVB Annual Winery Conditions Surveys

Burgundy Breaks All Price Records Burgundy hit record highs both in price and market share in 2018. The Burgundy 150 index, which tracks the price movements of the most active Burgundy wines in the secondary market (mainly Grand Crus), climbed 168.8% since 2010 according to Liv-ex. Two bottles of 1945 Romanée-Conti became the most expensive wines ever sold at auction and Burgundy's success has not been limited just to DRC. harpers.co.uk reported that "the price rises could be facing some headwinds as there are fewer buyers at these stratospheric prices."

Chef Dustin Valette to Open Two New Healdsburg Restaurants According to sonomamag.com, Valette and business partner and brother Aaron Garzini and tech executive Craig Ramsey are to open The Matheson (main floor 98-seat restaurant) and Roof 106 (an al fresco rooftop restaurant), a two-restaurant project on the Healdsburg Plaza. Visit www.thematheson.com.

Upcoming Events of Interest: San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition Public Tasting, February 16, 2019, Fort Mason, San Francisco, advance tickets \$70, www.winejudging.com. **Anderson Valley White Wine Festival**, February 23-24, 2019, Saturday Winemaker Dinners and Saturday and Sunday Winery Open Houses, www.avwines.com/white-wine-festival. **Here's to Her, a feast and fete for women-owned wineries**, February 12, 2019, Suite D, 21800 Schellville Rd, Sonoma, tickets \$95-\$350 at www.eventbrite.com.



World of Pinot Noir, Bacara Resort, Santa Barbara, March 1-2, 2019, www.worldofpinotnoir.com. **Sonoma Barrel Tasting 2019**, March 1-3, 8-10, www.wineroad.com. **La Paulée de New York**, March 5-10, 2019, New York City, Burgundy growers, collectors and aficionados gather for a week of dinners, tastings and talks, capped by a massive BTOB fête fashioned after the annual La Paulée de Meursault in France, www.lapaulee.com.