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Vosne-Romanee

The Abbe Courtepee, writing before the French Revolution, said of Vosne-Romanee: "There are no common wines in the Village." Vosne-Romanee is the greatest Pinot Noir village in the world. It has six of the 24 great growth vineyards in the Cote de Nuits. Gevrey-Chambertin may have more (eight) and the combined harvest may be greater in Corton, but to wine connoisseurs it possesses the greatest of *grand cru climates*: La Romanee-Conti, the most expensive Burgundy money can buy, La Tache which is often equal to or surpassing it, aristocratic Richebourg, silky-smooth Romanee-Saint-Vivant, not to mention several *premier crus* like Cros Parentoux which is as good as a *grand cru*.



The Vosne-Romanee style is rich, sensual, and masculine. Practically every estate in the Village produces excellent wine. The consumer can hardly go wrong.

Grands Crus: **Echezeux** (one of the largest *grands crus* and the size dictates that terroir varies considerably, a second division *grand cru*), **Grands Echezeux** (between Clos Vougeot and Echezeux, superior to Echezeux, hard in its youth and needs time), **La Grand Rue** (between La Tache and La Romanee, *grands cru* quality potential but owners have not farmed the land well or made good wine), **La Romanee-Saint-Vivant** (land closest to the Village, lightest and most feminine of Vosne *grands crus*), **Richebourg** (best of the non-monopole *grands crus* of Vosne, very fat, rich, and intense, a great Burgundy vineyard), **La Tache** (monopoly of DRC, cultivated biologically since 1985, a sumptuous wine), **La Romanee** (smallest appellation controlee in France, upslope from Romanee-Conti, austere wine in its youth), **Romanee-Conti** (the most celebrated *grand cru* in Burgundy, average production 6,000 bottles). Total of 75 hectares, 300,000 bottles on average per annum (more than half from Echezeux).

Premier Crus: **Aux Malconsorts, Les Chaumes, Clos des Reas, Les Gaudichots, Aux Reignots, Cros Parentoux, Les Petite Monts, Aux Brulees, Les Beaux-Monts, Les Suchots, La Croix-Rameau, En Orveaux, and Les Rouges.** Total of 58 hectares, 316,800 bottles on average per annum.

A fine Burgundy slides down your throat like the good Lord Jesus in silk trousers.

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*In the first half of 2003 Californians purchased nearly 3.5 million cases of \$1.99 wine, and that represented about one out of every five domestically produced bottles.

* Somebody paid \$85 for a case of Charles Shaw wine on Wine-Bid.com— eight bidders were in the running. \$24 at Trader Joes

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Vosne-Romanee Producers of Note

Domaine Jean Grivot (Etienne Grivot) - top producer, uses Accad method.

Jean et Michel Gros— pure, very intense.

Leroy (Lalou Bize)- the greatest estate in Burgundy and certainly the one that produces the most expensive wines. Wines are magnificent. Yields are very, very small, biodynamic cultivation. Very intense, pure, and concentrated wines.

Meo-Cazumet— wine is made in the Jayer way, total destemming, several days cold maceration, long cuvaison, and lots of oak.

Romanee-Conti— the most famous name in Burgundy and one of its largest domains, certainly the largest in terms of *grands cru* ownership. No destemming here, mechanical pigeage, matured entirely in new oak.

Sylvain Cathiard, Bruno Clavelier, Philippe Engel, Anne and Francois Gros, Henri Jayer, Laurent, Mongeard-Mugneret, Dr. Georges Mugneret, Emmanuel Rouget, and Jean Tardy.

Are the wines worth their high prices? The answer is yes if you prize these sublimely individual, poised, and intensely-flavored wines.

Francis Tannahill

This is a new winery and new label that has arisen from the marriage of Sam Tannahill, former winemaker at Archery Summit for 7 years, and subsequently Shea Wine Cellars where he will remain a consultant thru 2003 and Cheryl Francis, winemaker at Chehalem thru the 2003 harvest. The couple has already produced the label A to Z Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, and Pinot Noir, all priced under \$20. The A to Z Pinot Noir is a blend of grapes from several sources throughout Oregon and has received very favorable reviews in the wine press. It is a great value Pinot at less than \$20. The new winery is being developed from the old Cuneo winery in Eola Hills. Currently a Montazi Pinot Noir and Shea Pinot Noir are in barrel. The owners plan to keep prices affordable and limit production to 4,000 cases per year.

Sam Tannahill is a busy guy— he currently consults for Battlecreek Cellars in Salem, Sawtooth Winery in Idaho, Edenvale in Southern Oregon, and Zelko Winery in the Eola Hills owned by physician John Zelko.

Rusack Vineyards

Rusack was established in 1985 by Geoff and Alison Rusack in the Ballard Canyon area of Santa Ynez Valley. But it is only recently the winery has started producing excellent Pinot Noir. That began when John Falcone was hired as winemaker 18 months ago. Falcone spent seven years as winemaker at Napa's Atlas Peak where the best known wine was Sangiovese. So how did he have success with Pinot? He says that the two varieties have many of the same problems— the vineyard must have the right site and the vines managed properly, and gentle handling in the winery is key. The winery's Ballard Canyon location is too warm for Pinot Noir, so the grapes are purchased

The three current bottlings are in an elegant style and include: **2001 Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir (\$18)** has dark cherry, a hint of cola and good acidity, **2001 Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$25)** pretty and feminine, crushed strawberries, good structure, and **2001 Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$32)** has the most depth, and concentration. 805-688-1278, www.rusackvineyards.com

Where Do I Find That Pinot Noir?

How many times have you bought a bottle, laid it down in your cellar for a few months before uncorking it. You really enjoyed it and after a little research found it got good reviews. You return to the place of purchase but the wine is now gone. How do you find it without hours of frustrating phone calls? Luckily there are several wine search engines which allow the user to search across hundreds or thousands of wine sellers to find specific labels and vintages. There are basically three major services: WineAccess.com, Wine-Searcher.com, and WineAlert.com.

WineAccess.com: claims a database of 45,000 wines. Most vendors can ship to US cities. You must sign up but membership is free.

Wine-Searcher.com: 1,200 stores worldwide. The site is free, but a “pro” membership for \$24.95 a year gives a more complete listing and a more detailed search. You can easily link to sellers web pages all over the world. I have used this search engine with great success.

WineAlert.com: database of 25,000 wines. Membership is free but allows only access to 2,000 wines. A “gold” service costs \$29.95 a year and allows more extensive access.

Interestingly, in doing comparison price shopping, I have never seen lower prices than those available here in Orange County at Wine Club and Wine Exchange.

Barbecue Season

Barbecue derives from the Spanish *barbacoa* or the French *babracot*, both adaptations by the Indians of the Caribbean. Real barbecue has absolutely nothing to do with grilling. Backyard grilling (which nearly everybody outside the South calls barbecuing) is quick cooking over intense dry heat on an open brazier. Real barbecue is slow, enclosed cooking at gentle temperatures in moist hardwood smoke. Most people grill their meat to rare and juicy. Real barbecue is always well done. Any sign of blood or fat is a serious flaw. The meat must pull easily from the bone and separate into long, moist shreds. Real barbecue never sizzles, it just develops quietly into a higher plane of existence. Sauces can be used for marinating, for injecting flavor, for basting, as a finishing sauce, or as a table sauce. Some cooks use no sauce at all, instead sprinkling a layer of dry rub on at the beginning. Anyway you cook it, real barbecue is one of the most delicious foods ever devised by mankind. Break out a good Pinot or sparkling wine and have at it.

Eastern Europe Pinot Noir

Two countries not known for Pinot Noir have started a push in production of the varietal.

In Hungary Pinot Noir is known as Nagyburgundi. The Pinot Noir juice can be as good in Southern Hungary as anywhere in Europe outside of Burgundy.

Romania lies at the same latitude as France with ideal vine-growing conditions similar to Bordeaux. Wine production has been recorded in this country as early as the 4th Century BC and currently the country is the 9th largest wine producer in the world. Recently there has been a trend toward planting vines of varietals such as Pinot Noir which are popular in Western markets.

A recent wine.com visitor survey found the most popular varietals to be: (1) Merlot, (2) Pinot Noir, and (3) Chardonnay.

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir


PrinceofPinot.com

A new quarterly wine newsletter, *Truth in Wine*, allows consumers to choose a wine from a health standpoint. The newsletter takes labels from specific categories and assigns ratings based on lab tests for calories, carbohydrates, sulfites, polyphenols, catechins, resveratrol, sugar and minerals. Tests are conducted by Covance Inc. of Princeton, NJ.

The premier issue studied 30 grocery store wines. The actual alcohol content of the wines was less than that stated on their labels in every case, and some were under-reported by more than 1.5%. The top-rated red wine was the 2000 Columbia Crest Merlot-Cabernet from Washington and the top-rated white wine was the 2001 Woodbridge California Chardonnay

