

PinotFile[©]

Domaine Denis Bachelet

Denis Bachelet produces some of the silkiest, most stylish wines in Gevrey-Chambertin. Typically wines from Gevrey-Chambertain display power and a chewy richness instead of finesse or style. However, Denis Bachelet's wines mask the power beneath a silky, stylish coating of wild black fruit flavors.

He has run his tiny domaine of 5.14 acres since 1983. One of the keys to his success is very low-yielding, old vines. His 1er Cru Corbeaux was planted by his grandfather in 1920, and the average age of the Charmes-Chambertin vines is even older (he replants 2-3% per year).

He varies the amount of new oak by Cru: none for the Village Gevrey, 50% for the 1er Cru Corbeaux, and 100% for his Charmes-Chambertin.

The lineup: Bourgogne (he has less than an acre of vines outside the appellation of Gevrey-Chambertin), Gevrey-Chambertain Villes Vignes (a 2.47 acre parcel), Gevrey-Chambertain Les Corbeaux (parcel of .74 acre), and Charmes-Chambertin (1.23 acre tract).

2001 Domaine Denis Bachelet Gevrey Chambertain Villes Vignes \$40
Denis Bachelet makes outstanding wines in great vintages. In the 2001 vintage, the best wines in Burgundy came from Gevrey-Chambertain. Not surprisingly then, this wine is a terrific value for the breeding. Feminine, lush, with lots of seamless finesse. A Clive Coates 91. This wine can easily be cellared for 7-8 years. Put some Shama Lama in your Ding Dong.

Sources include Wine Club and New York Wine Warehouse

If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir

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The history of Gevrey-Chambertin goes back to the seventh century and the Abbey of Beze. Here, monks produced a remarkable wine known today as Chambertin-Clos de Beze. The field next to the Abbey was owned by a peasant named Bertin. It, too, was planted in vines and its fame spread, becoming known as Champs de Bertin (Bertin's Field)-today Chambertin

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Loring Wine Co Top-Notch to Wine Spectator



In previous issues I introduced to you an exciting new Santa Barbara area Pinot Noir producer—Loring Wine Company (LWC)—a tiny one-man winery located in Buellton. Entire production for 2002 was under 2000 cases for owner and winemaker Brian Loring who resides nearby in Anaheim Hills. His Pinot Noirs have sort of flown under the radar to date, although pinot-philes have snapped them up and they have appeared on very prestigious restaurant wine lists. James Laube did have a full page photo in *Wine Spectator* last year.

The *Wine Spectator*'s recent "Insiders Weekly" internet article pulled the LWC out of obscurity and into the limelight. The rating of the five 2002 Pinot Noirs averaged 92+ points. These are the best wines yet from this producer. The lineup:

- 2002 LWC Santa Lucia Highlands "Gary's Vnyd"** 93 points. "A delicious mouthful of Pinot."
340 cases \$46
- 2002 LWC Chalone "Brousseau Vnyd"** 92 points. "Opulent, elegant." 200 cases \$46.
- 2002 LWC Santa Lucia "Rosella's Vnyd"** 91 points. "Elegant, effusively fruity." 150 cases \$46
- 2002 LWC Santa Maria Valley "Rancho Ontiveros Vnyd"** 90 points. "Superripe, high-toned black berry and wild berry flavors." 150 cases \$46
- 2002 LWC Clos Pepe Vineyard** "Packed to rafters with fruit, needs cellar time." A poster wine for the people that hate the new, bigger style of California Pinot Noir. \$46

Interestingly, since Brian is not trying to create wines that will age for a long time, he decided to bottle all of the 2002s with synthetic corks. He also switched to a more wine-rack friendly, slim bottle. I think this is smart, as it is always difficult to get those fat, heavy Pinot Noir bottles stored anywhere in your cellar.

1-877 LWC-Wine, www.LoringWineCompany.com,
Brian Loring 7981 E Monte Carlo Ave, Anaheim Hills, CA 92808
Also available at Wine Room in Irvine (see Issue 15)

Vintage Tastings: A Delicious Read

Vintage Tastings is a wine newsletter written by John Kapon dedicated to reviewing and re-reviewing the world's finest and rarest wines. John is the President of wine auction house Acker Merrill & Condit and attends numerous high-profile wine tastings throughout the country each year. His wine descriptions are very witty and scoring is on the 100 point scale (not done blind). Steve Tanzer of *IWC* said, "an amazing publication—great fun to read." I personally look forward to every issue, enamored by the famous, largely unobtainable wines that are tasted.

At www.vintagetastings.com there is a sample newsletter and instructions for subscribing. The newsletter is available in electronic and written formats. \$75/year. You can also call at 1-877-Acker-47 or write John Kapon at matt@ackerwines.com.



Rose Champagne

I haven't written too much in these pages about the contribution of Pinot Noir to fine Champagne and sparkling wines. This time of year, however, every meal or get-together seems to demand a toast with some fine bubbly. My thoughts frequently turn to Rose Champagne, partly because of the festive salmon color and partly because of the notable presence of seductive Pinot fruit.

Most of you know that Rose sparkling wine is made by either one of two ways: (1) the color coming from contact with the skin of Pinot Noir grapes in the vat at the time of pressing, or (2) the addition of still Pinot Noir wine ("a saignee") to the final blend of white sparkling wine. Most of the finest examples of Rose Champagne are made of 100% Pinot Noir, often from Grand Cru vineyards in Champagne.

I learned recently from *NatsDecants* newsletter an interesting bit of Champagne history. Elizabeth Law de Lauriston-Boubers, known as Madame Jacques, ran the champagne house of Bollinger from 1941-1971. In 1969, she introduced the first Champagne made only from Pinot Noir grapes— "Vielles Vignes Francaises." Woman attached to the royal courts deserve much of the credit for the fame and success of Champagne. Madame de Pompadour said that Champagne was the only drink that left a woman still beautiful after drinking it. Madame de Parabere once expressed that Champagne was the only wine to give brilliance to the eyes without flushing the face.

Some favorites: **Laurent Perrier Brut Rose** 100% Pinot Noir, this Rose is one of the classiest of the breed, \$43. **Billecart-Salmon Brut Rose** is made from the best Crus of 40% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay, and 20% Pinot Meunier. The grapes are first vinified to produce a sparkling white wine, which then receives a small saignee of still Pinot Noir (8% of the total). The saignee gives the finished Rose its unique salmon-pink color. \$55. **Billecart-Salmon Rose "Cuvee Elisabeth"** is made only from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and is vintage-dated. All grapes are strictly from Grand Cru vineyards. The Pinot Noir is from Bouzy and Ambonnay. Perhaps 900 cases for the globe, this vintage Rose is highly sought after and well worth the price of \$100.

Gruet Grand Rose 1999 comes from (surprise!) New Mexico. In the early 1980s, the Gruet family was faced with rising land prices in France and looking for ways to increase their business, came to the United States and built a winery alongside I-25, the main route from Albuquerque to Santa Fe. This Rose has a stunning color and wonderful aroma of ripe strawberries. \$30. **Pacific Echo Anderson Valley Brut Rose** is refreshing drink with brisk acidity and good length., \$23. **Soter Beacon Hill Yamhill County Brut Rose** has a lot of berry fruit flavor despite its delicate pale salmon color. Made by Tony Soter of Etude fame. A more weighty style of sparkling Rose, \$40.

Barham Mendelsohn Pinot Noir

The 2001 vintage is the second release of this small production Pinot Noir. In 1998, Barbara Barham Mendelsohn and Richard Mendelsohn planted 5 acres of Pinot Noir on Lala Panzi Ranch in the Russian River Valley near Healdsburg in Sonoma County. The Mendelsohns engaged successful and experienced viticulturalist Fred Peterson to direct the planting of 6100 vines on their ranch land. 5 clones, 114, 115, 667, and 777 from Dijon in Burgundy, and the traditional Pommard selection from UC Davis were planted. Careful canopy management, organic farming, and sustainable agriculture are employed. After an interview process, the owners connected with Jim Clendenen of Au Bon Climat and the first vintage was driven down to Santa Barbara for him to make the wine. The 2001 vintage is a better wine and with very young vines, the future looks very promising.

Barham Mendelsohn Russian River Estate Pinot Noir 2001. \$30 The wine exhibits the classic black cherry and spice notes of the Russian River Valley appellation, with a lush, soft texture and very accessible style. Classy package. 1225 cases. Available at Wine Exchange and Wine Cask (Santa Barbara).



What to do with those beautifully packaged bottles of Pinot Noir with wax seals? Before you spread bits of hard wax all over your cellar and swear never to purchase another wax-sealed bottle of wine, remember these two wax opening tips:

- (1) Carefully score an X on the flat/top portion of the wax to break the surface, place the worm of your corkscrew through the middle of the X and pull the cork through.**
- (2) If the wax is too taught to score through, either a) run the waxed-portion of the neck under warm water for five to ten seconds, or b) place the palm of your hand flatly over the top of the waxed neck. Twist your palm rapidly over the wax, to create friction. This friction will cause heat, which will soften the wax.**

Stay calm!

Sulfites in Wine

Sulfites, various forms of sulfurous acid, have been used since the days of the ancient Romans and Egyptians for cleansing wine containers. Sulfites were approved for use in the United States in the early 1800's to preserve foods. It is their antioxidant and antimicrobial properties that have been invaluable to winemaking. The sulfites either inhibit or kill bacteria and wild yeast encouraging rapid and clean fermentation of wine grapes. Sulfites are also a natural and minor byproduct of yeast fermentation and are produced during the wine fermentation process.

Although sulfites are safe for most people, there are selected patients with asthma and others who are sensitive to these substances. About 1% of people are sulfite-sensitive, but in asthmatics, the figure is closer to 5%. Steroid-dependent asthmatics are most at risk for a severe reaction. Since 1985 the FDA has required foods, such as wine, to indicate the presence of sulfites on the label to alert the small percentage of people of the possible problems that may be associated with consuming the sulfite-containing food.

The symptoms of sulfite sensitivity reaction are usually mild and consist of a skin rash accompanied by redness, hives, itching, flushing, tingling, and swelling. In more severe cases, respiratory symptoms can include wheezing, difficulty breathing, and loss of consciousness.

The headaches, stuffy nose, and rosy cheeks that some people develop after drinking red wine is not related to the sulfite content of wine, but probably is due to other substances contained within the wine such as histamines, tyramine, and phenolic flavonoids. These symptoms do not progress to a more serious reaction. Ingesting aspirin, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen prior to drinking wine can block the "red wine headache syndrome".