

PinotFile[©]

Pinot Noir Cheese Pairings

I attended the World of Pinot Noir Conference in Shell Beach recently and was impressed by the artisan cheeses offered by The Cheese Shop in Carmel, California. One of these cheeses, **Epoisses de Bourgogne** (Berthaut), a name-controlled cow's milk cheese from the Cote d'Or in France, was a stunning match for the various Pinots on our table at the Santa Barbara-style Paulee Dinner hosted by Au Bon Climat. The milk for this cheese comes from cows that have grazed for three months in the meadows of Burgundy. Epoisses is first washed with salty water (washed rind cheese) and then stored in a humid cellar. After one month, it is washed again with a mix of rainwater and the spirit *marc de Bourgogne*, often one to three times a week, with gradually increasing quantities of *marc*.



Napoleon is said to have been partial to this cheese and ate it with Chambertin. Although this cheese was very popular at the beginning of the 20th century, production did not survive World War II. Berthaut in the village of Epoisses revived it in 1956.

This cheese has a strong smell, with a powerful aroma of *marc*. The texture is soft and melting in the mouth, with rich flavors of salt and sweet, butter, and milk. As the cheese ages, it ripens from the edible sticky orange exterior inward. Try Epoisses on a good baguette with your favorite Pinot and I guarantee that you will be on your knees looking at heaven.

There are a number of other artisanal cow's milk cheeses available that compliment Pinot Noir. **Perlgrigria** (aka Sottocenere) from Venice, Italy, contains shavings of black truffle. This semi-soft cheese is covered in ash to preserve the flavors. The ash ingredients include truffle powder, nutmeg, cloves, coriander, cinnamon, licorice, and fennel. **Piave Vechhia** originates in the province of Belluno in Italy. Milk is collected from cows that graze the riverbank of the river Piave, then the curd is cooked and the cheese is aged until it is hard. The intense, full-bodied flavor increases with age. **Toma Del Maccagno** is produced on the mountains of Biella and Valsesia. It is a typical mountain cheese made with cow's raw whole milk and has a distinct fragrance of pasture and pleasant floral aromas.

**If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

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"Perhaps the most wondrous feature of wine is its ability to lead us into reverie, to welcome us through the portals of fantasy into the mythical dream-scape where grapes are transformed in the manner of Ovid, into utterly magical creations, pinots into princes."

Randall Grahm

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August Briggs Winery

August “Joe” Briggs has been consulting in the wine industry for the past 20 years and producing his own wine under the August Briggs label since 1995. In 2002, he gave up his nomadic consulting career and purchased property on the Silverado Trail in Calistoga. A winery on the site was recently completed and opened to the public for the first time on April 24. Although the town of Calistoga has been known for its health spas and more recently its numerous fine dining establishments, prior to the August Briggs Winery, it had never had a working winery within the city limits.

Today, the winery releases between 4,000 and 5,000 cases with no plans to expand. Briggs likes to keep the operation a family business and concentrate on making high-quality wine in small quantities.



2001 August Briggs Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, (\$35). The 7th vintage of this bottling. The source is a vineyard on Westside Road near Healdsburg. Aged 16 months in 100% French oak. 350 cases.

2001 August Briggs Dijon Clones Pinot Noir, (\$35). The 5th vintage of this wine. The grapes come from a vineyard located in the South Valley below the City of Napa on the eastern border of Carneros. The vineyard is planted to four French Dijon clones. Aged 16 months in 100% French oak. 250 cases.

Merry Edwards New Releases

Merry Edward’s 28 year winemaking career has been notable for her success in producing outstanding chardonnays at Mt Eden, Matanzas Creek, and Merry Vintners. Since 1997, when she co-founded the business venture, Meredith Vineyard Estate Inc., she has been able to pursue her love of Pinot Noir. The label, Merry Edwards Wines was started to produce Pinot Noirs from select vineyards in the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast appellations. In addition, she and husband Ken Coopersmith, now own for the first time their own vineyards and are cultivating 33 acres of Pinot Noir. Her wines have been consistently in the upper echelon of California Pinot Noirs and any serious pinophile should have some bottles in their cellar. The 2002 vintage was stellar.



Merry Edwards Wines
meredith vineyard estate, inc.
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY PINOT NOIR

2002 Merry Edwards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, (\$27). The grapes come from Edwards’ estate vineyard planted in 1998 on a southeast-facing slope at the southern boundary of the Russian River Valley. The vineyard is planted in both French clones and old, classic California selections to give the wine added complexity.

2002 Merry Edwards Olivet Lane Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, (\$51). The Olivet Lane vineyard is one of the Russian River’s oldest (vines are over thirty years old) and best Pinot Noir vineyards. This wine, the sixth consecutive vintage of Olivet Lane Pinot Noir, is a classic.

2002 Merry Edwards Windsor Gardens Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, (\$54). This non-irrigated, old-vine (more than thirty years old) vineyard is planted to the Martini clone and enjoys a special location in the northern portion of the Russian River Valley. This will be the last vintage from this vineyard as a developer is removing the vines to build houses on the site (ugh!).

Prearrival Burgundy 2002

The 2002 vintage on the Cotes is one of the most consistent Burgundy vintages in recent memory. At every level, from Bourgogne to Grand Cru, the wines are appealing to drink early and capable of aging in the cellar for many years. Some of the wines are now being offered on prearrival in the States, but you will need to act fast to snag a few bottles from this highly-touted vintage. Here are a few offerings I ran across recently from the Wine Club (www.thewineclub.com).

2002 Pousse D'Or Volnay Clos de la Bousse d'Or. A Burghound 92, classic Volnay. \$44.99.

2002 Pousse D'Or Volnay Cailleret Clos des Soixante Ouvrees. Another Burghound 92, an ager. \$44.99.

2002 Simon Bize Savigny-les-Beaune Aux Vergelesses. Still another Burghound 92, Bize's top Savigny. \$33.99.

2002 Louis Jadot Beaune les Boucherottes (\$27.99), **2002 Louis Jadot Beaune Chouacheux** (\$27.99), and **2002 Louis Jadot Beaune Clos des Ursules** (\$36.99). "Burgundy's 2002 vintage is exceptionally embodied in the wines of Louis Jadot" - Pameladevi Govinda, *Wine & Spirits* columnist.

New Wine Bar Has "The Good Stuff"

Len Stevens and Nancy Richards opened the L & N Wine Bar & Bistro in Louisville, Kentucky about six months ago. The wine selection is impressive with Pinot Noirs by Brewer-Clifton, Siduri, Ancien, Melville, and Ken Wright, and Burgundies by Dugat-Py among others. Tastes are offered in both 2 oz (taste size) and 6 oz (in Reidel stemware) format. A 54 tap Cruvinet wine system is the largest in the country. The food selection, from small appetizers to full dinners has been very favorable reviewed by the local press. Len is a big Pinot Noir enthusiast who would love to talk pinotology if you are in the Louisville area.

The web address is landwinebar.com.



Pinot Lovers Wine Events

20th Annual Central Coast Wine Classic is a four day celebration of the wines, cuisine, music, art, and lifestyle of California's Central Coast. The event kicks off on Thursday with a barrel tasting at the Cliffs Resort at Shell Beach with over 75 West Coast wineries offering their unreleased wines. On Friday is a Pinot Noir Terroir Symposium featuring Pinot Noir wines from California, Oregon, and France. On the same day you can attend a winery dinner at one of several great Pinot Noir producers, such as Au Bon Climat, Baileyana, Laetitia, and Stephen Ross. Saturday offers several fine wine auctions. The finale on Sunday is a Reserve Wine Tasting in which over 75 wineries pour two of their top-of-the-line renderings. Date is July 15-18, 2004. Website is www.centralcoastwineclassic.org.

Sonoma County Showcase of Wine & Food is a three day gala, July 15-17, 2004, to benefit local Sonoma charities. This event is recognized as the largest wine event in Sonoma County and features Pinot Noirs from all winegrowing regions. At the Taste of Sonoma County hosted by Clos du Bois, 100 wineries will be pouring their wines. Other activities include a golf tournament, a concert by the San Francisco Symphony, and winery lunches and dinners. For more information the website is www.sonomawine.com, or phone 707-586-3795.




 Princeofpinot.com

Drinking Pinot Noir is a lot like finding a wife. You have to spend some time with dogs to find a queen. You might drink ten Pinot Noirs to find one that is worthy. But when you find that one, oh boy, it turns you on like nothing else. Pinot Noir is not like Chardonnay or Cabernet Sauvignon. If you buy a case of these two varietals, the wine will taste about the same 1 week, 1 month, or 6 months from now. Pinot Noir will never render its charms in a similar orderly fashion. Somehow this seems very sexy and the analogy with finding a wife seems very apropos. (You can reverse this analogy if you are a woman reader but it doesn't quite have the same ring. In fact, my wife, left, on a recent trip to Adobe Guadalupe Winery in Baja, California, looked at me very funny when she read this.)

Spitting Pinot Noir



Somehow I just can't get myself to spit wine like the "winery guys" do it. The wine either ends up on the front of my shirt and pants, or I cough and sputter as a small bit finds its way down my throat and windpipe. I am fairly successful if I have a cup or similar container that I can hold up to my mouth, but at wineries there is usually a bucket over in the far corner or a grating with a drainage channel at least five feet away on the floor.

It makes a lot of sense to spit when you taste. After tasting several wines, a significant amount of alcohol takes hold and numbs your tasting capabilities. The result is that all wines taste the same after awhile and you begin to ask silly questions of the winemaker. If you can spit well, it is a badge of experience and winemanship that brings you into the wine fraternity and may get you access to tasting reserve wines that ordinary non-spitting soles would never experience.

I asked a friend, Master Sommelier, Rene Chazottes, how I could learn to spit well. I haven't seen any courses at wine conferences and no advice has been forthcoming in the wine press or on the internet. He advised me to practice with water, preferably when sober, before wasting any good wine. Take a somewhat larger than normal gulp in your mouth, draw in some air over the wine, and then expel it by narrowing the opening between your lips to an oval. I plan to do this sometime when my wife and kids are out of the house. Maybe I will let my dog watch as she is extremely forgiving. The problem is, I have very poor motivation to spit when I can drink. Something about spitting out Pinot Noir seems crude and misplaced.