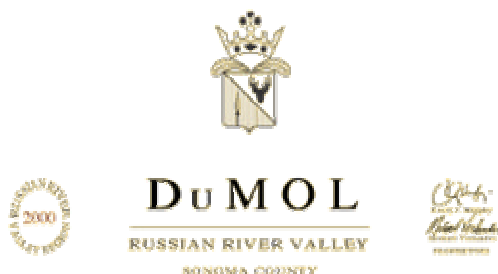


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The FIRST Wine Newsletter Devoted Exclusively to Pinot Noir

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## DuMol



DuMol Wine Company was founded in 1996 by Kerry Murphy and Michael Verlander to produce exceptional quality Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Russian River Valley in Sonoma County. The owners work with Dutton Ranch and Hanna Family farmers whose mature vineyards are mostly centered in the coastal Green Valley district near the small town of Graton. The vineyards are between eight and twelve miles from the Pacific Coast on a series of ridge tops at an elevation of 400 to 800 feet. Using primarily traditional California heritage selections, they prefer to craft a blended wine that represents the Green Valley terroir rather than producing four or five “monochromatic” vineyard-designated wines. Gradually they have added some younger grape sources including their own 16-acre estate vineyard currently under development.

**2002 DuMol Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$50) A showy Pinot Noir with a lot of muscle— a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir taken up a notch. A bit high on the alcohol and sweetness scale, it needs 4-6 years of cellar time (or decant for at least an hour before drinking).

**2002 DuMol Ryan Green Valley Pinot Noir** A new wine in the lineup. Similar fat style that is both flamboyant and ethereal. Parkeresque.

**2002 DuMol Finn Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$66) A behemoth with muscles to spare. This cuvee comes from two mature vineyards— one is picked early for its bright Pinot character, while the second is given more hang time for more weight, structure and power. Needs time.

The best way to obtain the wines is to sign up for the pre-release program on the website— [www.dumol.com](http://www.dumol.com) (website needs updating) or phone 925-254-8922. Also [brownderbywine.com](http://brownderbywine.com), [vintagewines.biz](http://vintagewines.biz), and [pjwine.com](http://pjwine.com) (only the RRV bottling available at retailers).

**P-no no R  
or as they say  
in the south  
Peanut-Nowhar**

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The 2002 Pinot Noir vintage in the Russian River Valley and in the Sonoma Coast is the best since 1994. Along with the great 2002 Oregon Pinot Noirs and Burgundies, there is a lot to choose from.

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## Domaine Serene Tops DRC in Blind Tasting

Thirty-seven wine industry professionals from twenty-two states across the country were invited to blind taste Oregon's Domaine Serene Pinot Noirs against the Grand Cru Burgundy wines of Domaine de la Romanee-Conti (DRC) on June 29, 2004. In tasting flights from the 1998, 1999, and 2000 vintages, Domaine Serene wines swept the tastings, ranking first (Domaine Serene's Grace Vineyard placed first in all three vintage flights) and second in every flight.

**1998 Vintage:** Dom Serene Grace Vnyd (\$75) 1st, Dom Serene Mark Bradford Vnyd (\$75) 2nd, Dom Serene Evenstad Reserve (\$47) 3rd, DRC Grand Echezeaux (\$495) 4th, DRC La Tache (\$450) 5th, and DRC Richebourg (\$595) 6th.

**1999 Vintage:** Dom Serene Grace Vnyd (\$75) 1st, Dom Serene Mark Bradford Vnyd (\$75) 2nd, Dom Serene Evenstad Reserve (\$47) 2nd (tied), DRC Romanee St Vivant (\$695) 3rd, DRC Echezeaux (\$749) 4th, DRC Grand Echezeaux (\$495) 4th (tied).

**2000 Vintage:** Dom Serene Grace Vnyd (\$75) 1st, Dom Serene Evenstad Reserve (\$47) 2nd, DRC Romanee St Vivant (\$350) 3rd, DRC Grand Echezeaux (\$435) 3rd (tied), DRC Echezeaux (\$240) 4th, and Dom Serene Mark Bradford (\$75) 5th.

Kevin M. Vogt, Master Sommelier at the Delmonico Steakhouse at the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas commented: "I really do believe that the Domaine Serene wines showed exceptionally well when paired up with the DRC wines. It was refreshing to find that Domaine Serene wines not only held their own against the DRC wines, but clearly outclassed some of them."

I suggest a few caveats. The wines were not tasted with food. Blind tastings like this are misleading since they have nothing to do with the way the wines should be drunk, that is, at the table with food. Secondly, all of the DRC wines were from recent vintages. Anyone even mildly cognizant of wine realizes that New World wines taste great out of the shoot because of all the up front fruit they possess, while Grand Cru Burgundies are much more acidic and reticent initially and require around 8-10 years to come into their own. It would be interesting to repeat this tasting in ten years. Finally, the cost is irrelevant. DRC is a designer wine and as such, commands prices way out of proportion to quality in many cases. The Echezeaux and Grand Echezeaux bottlings have never really justified their high prices, but that is not the point— you pay for the name.

## More Wine Competition Results

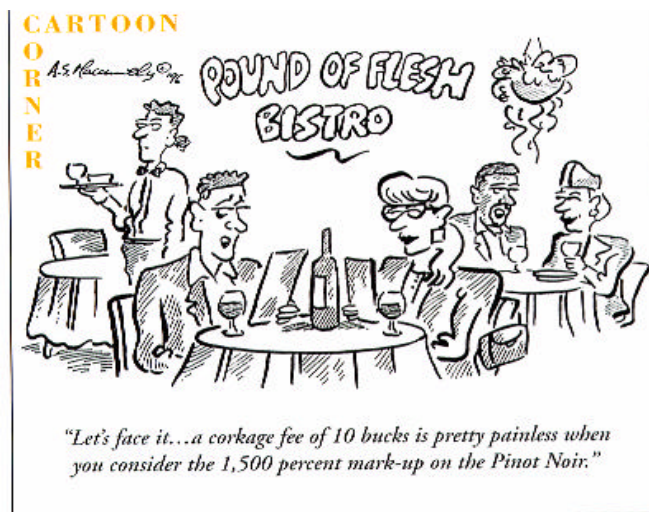
The Orange County Fair Wine Competition is possibly the nation's most credible wine event. The wines are broken down into price ranges and judged by 95 vintners. No trophy wines are judged. In its 28th year, the Competition drew 3,184 entries. There were 14 4-star Gold Medals (unanimous judging panel award), and a Best of Show (top wine in its price class). The Best of Show Red Wine at \$22 was the **2002 Navarro L'Ancienne Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**. The L'Ancienne refers to traditional winemaking techniques including a minimalist, reductive approach, avoiding unnecessary racking, fining, or filtration. This wine has been a perennial favorite of many Pinot Noir drinkers as it is consistently a fine value. It is never a showoff, but has balanced fruit and acid, with a comfortable amount of oak in the background to pair well with food.

At the California State Fair Wine Competition recently held, the award for Best Regional Wine was the **2001 La Crema Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**. Pinot Noir varietal gold medals were awarded to the **2002 David Bruce Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** and the **2001 Rodney Strong Reserve Jones Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**.



## “Hostage” Pinot Noirs

There is a curious phenomenon in the wine industry that involves “hostage” wines, that is, highly desirable wines that are sold only to select devotees who are helplessly held captive by the desired wine. These Pinot Noirs (Cabs are actually the biggest offenders) are typically produced in small quantities and highly allocated. They are usually only sold to mailing list customers who receive an offering based on their purchasing history. The customer is not given the chance to taste the wine prior to purchase (tasting rooms are unavailable for prisoners). The buyer cannot be choosy— he or she usually must purchase at least a case and may have to also buy wines other than Pinot Noir that the winery produces. The yearly offering usually comes with a disclosure that if you fail to buy any wine, you will be dropped from the list. Prices, of course, are high and always full retail with no discount for good purchasing behavior or full case orders. The winery typically has a sparse or nonexistent website, no visitors, no winemaker dinners, no marketing, and the winemaker is persona non grata. The wines are often available at “finer” restaurants which means marked up 2-3 times. This is to discourage escapees from the hostage program trying to circumvent the ordering process. Some mailing list customers attempt to take others as captives by selling their allotments at auction at sizable profit. These “wardens” show no mercy and some may not even drink the wines themselves. Occasionally a buyer may share his allocation with others if they have been on their best behavior.



## My Wine Epiphany

David from Northern California wrote to me about his wine epiphany. He had to think long and hard to figure out how he landed at the current spot on the big board of wine enjoyment. In the later 70s, a girlfriend was really taken by the Joseph Swan Pinot Noirs. He tried them and thought they were quite good, but still they were second fiddle to Cabernets and Zins that he preferred. After tasting a number of mediocre Pinot Noirs, the varietal was lost on his radar screen. But then a visit to Dehlinger Winery (back when the tasting room was still ‘open’ - in the early 90’s) lit the wick. The 1994 Dehlinger Reserve Pinot Noir was out-of-the-world, and he has never looked back. It only took about 10-12 years to finally get to Pinot Parkplace.

David also passes along a recommendation for **2001 Raye’s Hill Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** which he drank recently. At \$19, the quality was far beyond the price— focused layers of sweet fruit with balanced acidity.



Princeofpinot.com

**Dan Sebastiani & Sons has formed the Three Loose Screws Wine Company (3LS) ([www.3loosescrews.com](http://www.3loosescrews.com)). This division of Sebastiani Wines includes four varietals, all bottled with screw cap closures and priced in the mid-teens. The portfolio includes a Pinot Noir with a great name: **Screw Kappa Nappa**. The grapes are from the new Oak Knoll AVA and the wine comes in at a pleasant 13.7% alcohol. Three Loose Screws has taken a different twist on marketing fine wine to the other-than-enophile crowd. “Warning: Cork removal may be hazardous to your health. To keep our wine in the best possible condition, all Three Loose Screws brands use only the highest quality screwtop seals.” CEO Don Sebastiani said, “We think that screw caps are the way to go from every aspect of brand marketing, wine quality, image and ease of use.”**

## New California Pinot Noir Releases

**Brogan Cellars 2003 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$45)

**Brogan Cellars 2003 Lingenfelder Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$40)

**Brogan Cellars 2003 Summa “Young Vines” Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$55)

As you know Margi Brogan is Burt Williams’ daughter. Unfortunately, Burt’s son and Margi’s brother Fred Williams passed away 9/03 (Seven Lions Winery). 707-744-8760.

**Scherrer Winery 2002 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** (\$35) Classical Burgundian structure, from declassified Fort Ross Vineyard grapes. 280 cases

**Scherrer Winery 2002 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$35) Close to the great “Little Sister” bottling of 1999. 860 cases.

**Scherrer Winery 2002 Russian River Valley ‘Laguna’ Pinot Noir** (\$35) A blend from the same vineyard as the RRV bottling with darker fruits, more masculine character. 580 cases. 707-823-8980

**Melville 2003 Estate Pinot Noir** (\$26). A pre-release offering from 11 Pinot Noir clones planted on the estate. 14.5% alcohol. 3L also. 805-735-7030

**Miner 2002 Gary’s Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** (\$50). “A finish like hitting a 400 yard drive. Saucy, sassy, and just plain sexy.”

**Miner 2002 Rosella’s Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** (\$50). Debut Pinot Noir from this vineyard available at the winery and thru the website only. 150 cases. “The Siren’s song.” [www.minerwines.com](http://www.minerwines.com)