



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

Closing In On the Holy Grail

“For me, Pinot Noir is the Holy Grail, the most sensual of all wines, and I am staunchly determined to pursue my love affair with it.”

Russian River Valley winegrower Guy Davis has said, “The pursuit of creating the perfect Pinot Noir is like the pursuit of the Holy Grail. Only a few of us believe it exists but we wake up at dawn every day to move one step closer in our quest.” He goes on to state his five rules for crafting sacrosanct Pinot Noir: (1) Only grow Pinot Noir on sites destined for greatness, (2) Practice precision viticulture, (3) Be fanatical about picking on the right day, (4) Practice meticulous attention to the Pinot Noir wines in the cellar. Smell, taste, and talk to the wines every week, and (5) Be an expert at blending. You have to know what true greatness requires to achieve it.

Pinot Noir at its best can be the most complex and satisfying elixir ever consumed. When it's great, it's totally sensual. When people speak of the “Holy Grail” of wine, they are always talking about Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir remains the wine most serious winemakers want to make, and most serious winemakers want to drink.

I recently drank six California Pinot Noir wines that were so transcendent, so special and so Holy that I felt the need to share my impressions of these wines. I believe these wines are still available.

2017 COBB Diane Cobb: Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 175 cases, \$120. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very pleasing aromas of dark red cherry and berry along with tilled earth. A middleweight beauty featuring a core of cherries jubilee backed by lithe tannins. Impressive attack and length with an appealing “sweetness” to the fruit. The extremely long peacock finish offers a perfume of perfectly ripened dark red cherries. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine offered a cornucopia of silken cherry goodness that only Pinot Noir can deliver. 96*



Note: In 1989, Diane Cobb planted a 1/2-acre nursery plot at Coastlands Vineyard to determine which of 20 varieties of Pinot Noir was best suited to the site. Later, the plot was expanded with a single selection that she determined was among the best in the nursery. This wine is from 1.5 acres of Coastland Vineyard planted in 1989 and 1996 and is a tribute to Diane Cobb (1941-2006). A perennial favorite in the Cobb lineup vinified by Diane's son, Ross. Visit www.cobbwines.com to purchase COBB wines.

2018 Davis Family Vineyards Soul Patch Vineyard

Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$55.

Grown, vinted and bottled by Davis Family Wines, Sebastopol, CA. Native yeast fermentation in open-top fermentors after a 5 to 7-day cold soak. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 33% new, 33% one-year, and 33% 2-year. Only the favorite barrels of winemakers Guy and Cole Davis are included in this bottling. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Terrific aromatic purity upon opening with scents of blackberry, Dr. Pepper and spice cake. Mid-weight plus in style and very comforting in the mouth, with a glorious display of well-spiced, blueberry, olallieberry, black raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors framed by supportive ripe tannins. Impeccable balance, finishing with the perfume of lovely Pinot must. High drinkable now, but the harmony and tannic backbone predict at least a 20-year life ahead. This beauty is like the gorgeous girl in school you always wanted to date. 97*



Note: Guy and Judy Davis purchased the property on which Soul Patch Vineyard is planted in 1996. Guy planted the 7 acres of Pinot Noir to Pommard and Dijon clones 777, 667 and 115. Guy and his son Cole have farmed the vineyard since its purchase, in addition to the existing block of old vine Zinfandel. Only organic farming practices are used on this eastern-facing hillside with rows running north to south, insuring that all of the grapes receive equal exposure to the sun. The soil is Goldridge series, with a very high amount of volcanic ash. This vineyard is a true labor of love and this wonderful 2018 Pinot Noir is the culmination of twenty-two years of commitment to producing an “all-world” wine. Davis Family wines are sold on the website at www.davisfamilyvineyards.com.

2019 Drew Wendling Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot

Noir 13.0% alc., \$70. Produced and bottled by Drew Family Cellars, Elk, CA. Early spring release. Yield 2 tons per acre. Native yeast fermentation, 45% whole cluster, gravity racked twice, and aged in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very complex nose with a cornucopia of aromas including dark red cherry, black raspberry, pipe smoke, tarragon, sweet burnt tobacco and rose petal. The nose takes on more spellbinding aromas when the wine was sampled one day after opening. All the good things about Pinot Noir are wrapped up in this mid-weight wine including elegance, silkiness, polish, and balance. There is both dark red and black raspberry, black cherry and olallieberry fruit tastes on the palate displaying a satisfying, delicate richness. Lip-smacking, juicy acidity elevates the fruit vivaciousness and leads to a mouthwatering, extremely lengthy (45 seconds) finish. Best with cellaring or decanting. A liquid lullaby. 97*



Note: The 12-year-old Wendling Vineyard is the most north-westerly site in the Anderson Valley AVA, sitting in the “deepest end” of the valley on a 450 feet slope. The three soil types (Ornbaun, Wolfey and Bearwallow) offer excellent drainage. The cooler coastal temperatures provide for low to moderate yields that lead to a darker fruited Pinot Noir. The vineyard is planted to several suitcase selections (alleged DRC and La Tache selections as the basis of this wine) and Dijon clones. Jason Drew considers Wendling Vineyard one of a handful of “Grand Cru” sites in the Anderson Valley. Regarding the 2019 vintage, Jason says, “With more winter and spring rainfall in 2019 and cooler temperatures throughout the season without any extreme heat events, the 2019s will be known as

incredibly elegant vintage with lifted aromatics and ethereal weight with loads of character. Drew Family Cellars earned a well-deserved *Wine & Spirits Magazine* top 100 Winery of the Year (9th time this winery has been selected!). Drew Family wines are sold through a mailing list at www.drewwines.com.

2018 Dutton-Goldfield McDougall Ranch Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.65, \$68. Produced and bottled by Dutton-Goldfield, Santa Rosa, CA. 100% de-stemmed, 7-day cold soak. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very seductive aromas of black cherry, wild blueberry, nori, cocoa and rose petal. This charismatic beauty offers considerable nuance and length. Middleweight plus in style, with a charge of blueberry, boysenberry, black currant, red grape and spiced tea flavors that seductively caress the palate. The discreetly rich fruit is infused with lively acidity and framed by matched tannins. Oak is but a subtle seasoning. The extremely long finish was like "Whoa, Yeah. Hell, Yeah." So exquisitely balanced, this wine might outlive vintner Dan Goldfield. 97*



Note: The late Mac McDougall must be smiling from heaven. This 9-acre vineyard is atop a wind-swept, south-facing ridge at 1,100 feet just off the Sonoma Coast overlooking the Pacific Ocean and the Gualala River, and the neighbors at Hirsch and Martinelli vineyards. Soils are thin and well-drained. The grapes are typical west Sonoma Coast in origin, with thick skins, deep color and natural spice. As Dan Goldfield notes, "This vineyard wonderfully represents the wild beauty and intensity of the Sonoma Coast, both in its land and its fruit. Dutton-Goldfield wines are sold through a mailing list and on the winery's website at www.duttongoldfield.com.

2018 Maggy Hawk Jolie Maggy Hawk Estate Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc. (label), 14.1% (website), \$65, 484 cases. Produced and bottled by Maggy Hawk Vineyard Santa Rosa, CA. Clones are Pommard, 2A 115, 667 and 777. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the bottle. Soaring aromas of Bing cherry, raspberry, spice and sap right after opening. Delicious tastes of black cherry and raspberry have mouth-filling fullness and length. Beautifully balanced with buried tannins and an invigorating acid backbone. Very polished with a thoroughbred finish. The next day, when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine led me on a wonderful Pinot high. 96*



Note: This vineyard is located in a rugged and remote outpost at the "deep end" of the Anderson Valley surrounded by redwoods. I have visited the vineyard and it is one of the most spectacular I have ever experienced. Maggy Hawk is Kendall-Jackson's crown jewel of Pinot Noir and is named after owner Barbara Banke's favorite winning thoroughbred horse. The vineyard was planted in 2000 to 23.55 acres of distinct blocks with a variety of Pinot Noir clones including Pommard, Wadenswil 2A

and Dijon 115, 667 and 777. The layout is a complex array of steep slopes and aspects containing well-draining sandstone soil with low nutrients. The site is very cool and is often wind-swept as well as blanketed by coastal fog. Historically, the Maggy Hawk Pinot Noirs have been predominantly single-clone bottlings from specific vineyard blocks and named after Maggy Hawk's progeny: Jolie, Afleet, Stormin' and Unforgettable. One bottling, Hawkster, is named after Maggy Hawk's sire. Jolie has been composed of clone 115 but in this vintage there are four clones. Jolie has been my favorite Maggy hawk Pinot Noir in every vintage. Maggy Hawk wines are produced in small quantities and sold through a mailing list at www.maggyhawk.com.

**2019 Rivers-Marie Occidental Ridge Vineyard
Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 250 cases, \$60.

Cellared and bottled by Rivers-Marie Wines, Calistoga, CA. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. There is quite a bit of oak embellishment on the nose and palate initially but the wine finds its balance by the following day when it sheds its barrel cloak and becomes stunning.*

Bright aromas of black cherry and blueberry dance with exotic spices and rose petal. Discreetly concentrated in a mid-weight style with provocative flavors of black cherry and blueberry-pomegranate that offer considerable mid-palate length. Seductive silkiness and elegance, with modest, well-ripened, fine-grain tannins and a glorious finish that merges fruit and oak seamlessly. The best Pinot Noir beyond Summa Old Vines that I have ever tasted from winemaker Thomas Brown and one that will bring you closer to God. 96



Note: Long growing season allowing full maturity of fruit and judicious harvesting. This wine is the winemaker's favorite in 2019. He notes, "We find ourselves too often looking for the flaws in what we make, but here we allow ourselves to simply enjoy the wine for how good it is and give ourselves the slightest pat on the back. Completeness has a lot to do with our enjoyment of this vintage of Occidental Ridge, for the wine has no holes in the experience even at this young age. We've talked about this site as the co-flagship of the Rivers-Marie Pinot line-up and this edition of Occidental Ridge only reaffirms that." Rivers-Marie Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon is allocated to members of the mailing list at www.riversmarie.com.

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Older vintages of domestic Pinot Noir are rarely reviewed in the wine literature, yet copious words have been written about old bottlings of red Burgundy. It has been traditionally thought and taught that red Burgundy ages extremely well, but I believe the age ability of domestic Pinot Noir has been undersold.

Most domestic Pinot Noir is ready to drink upon release since they are not created with aging in mind. The winemaking techniques used for these wines favor fruitiness and freshness, not extraction of the tannins needed for a wine to age well. Tannins are natural preservatives that give wine the potential for a long life.

Historically, domestic Pinot Noir may have lacked the quality to stand up to aging. Only quality wines evolve into something more interesting. Wines that are of poor quality and lack balance will not be expected to improve simply by cellaring them. A wine cellar is not a wine hospital. Poorly balanced Pinot Noir wines may show exaggeration of elements that were not harmonious upon release, such as oak and alcohol as the fruit fades and faults in wine may exaggerate over time.

Estimating how long a wine will live is a common practice, but it is impossible to tell exactly how a wine will smell and taste at different intervals along the way. Noted winemaker Zelma Long has noted, "The truth of wine aging is that it is unknown, unstudied, poorly understood and poorly predicted. There are many disappointments and surprises along the way and this is the enticing attraction of opening a well-stored, old bottle of domestic Pinot Noir.

After my retrospective tasting of aged California Pinot Noirs reported in 2017 at www.princeofpinot.com/article/1916, I found more disappointments than epiphanies, with most Pinot Noir wines beyond ten years of age were at or near the precipice. I recommended that pinotphiles avoid being encumbered by worrisome thoughts about how long to cellar a domestic Pinot Noir. Just pop the cork when you feel like drinking a wine. It is a gospel truth that it is better to drink a domestic Pinot Noir too early than too late. Remember the old adage of Frank Sinatra, "Better to revel in the joy of youthfulness than the decrepitude of old age."

This retrospective tasting of Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs encompasses 18 wines from the 2012 vintage at 10 years of age. All wines were cellared perfectly in my commercial wine locker since release with very little or no movement. I have included scores from previous reviews and some comments I made several years ago when reviewed. I did not look at the scores from 2014-2015-2016 before the recent reviews. My findings and impressions follow.

There was considerable buzz about the 2012 vintage in Oregon, not all favorable. Generally, the vintage produced wines that were riper, more extracted and with more tannin and higher alcohol levels than in the previous two vintages and the 2013 vintage to follow. Some wine writers were critical of the wines, claiming they were more fruit-driven and California in style (whatever that exaggerated generalization means). At the time, I said enjoy what the vintage gave and celebrate in the opulent fruit flavors. How has a sampling of twenty of these wines aged after ten years?

2012 Cornerstone Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of dark cherry compote, spice and rose petal. Over time in the glass, oak-driven aromas of toast and vanilla come out. Mid-weight flavors of black cherry, boysenberry, and black tea are fresh and vibrant upon opening. Modest tannins with a hint of oak and a modestly long finish. Drink up. 92, 2015 93* ("tannic backbone to age")

2012 Gresser Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Vineyard Select Willamette Valley Pinot Noir

13.9% alc. *Moderate garnet color with slight bricking of the rim in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and earthy flora lead to a disappointingly thin-fruited mid palate and finish. Root beer is the most evident flavor. Past its prime with few redeeming features. Drink up.* **85, 2015 91** (“age ability”)

2012 Amalie Robert The Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., <50 cases. A barrel selection of most desirable wine in the cellar. A portion of whole cluster, aged 18 months. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose lacks fruit, offering only aromas of forest path, oak and medicine cabinet. Mid-weight flavors of cherry overshadowed by oak and tannin. Fruit has faded. A quenching finish of some length. Drink up.* **89, 2016 97** (“needs time in cellar for full enjoyment, firm tannins, nutty oak”)

2012 Amalie Robert Pommard Clone Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry, braised field greens and cardamom spice. Definitely shows aging qualities with tannins superseding the black cherry fruit. Frisky acidity with a slightly tart finish. More acid and tannin than fruit.* **88, 2016 93**

2012 Domaine Serene Yamhill Cuvée Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. This bottling is meant for early consumption but has held up surprising well over the past ten years. Nuanced nose displaying aromas of dark red cherry, sandalwood and spice. Darker fruited on the palate with a sweet tone to the fruit. Mild fine-grain tannins ply the background. The wine ends with a sweet blackberry flourish. Drink up.* **89 2016 89**

2012 Domaine Serene Mark Bradford Vineyard Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Oak (smoke, caramel) dominates the aroma profile that also includes black cherry and white pepper. Better on the palate, with black cherry fruit that seems a bit faded. Silky textured, with gentle tannins and a shadow of oak in the background. Fine but not exciting. Disappointing for a very expensive (\$125) bottling. Drink up to 3 years.* **89, 2016 94** (“smart new oak”)

2012 Antiquum Farm Passiflora Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 50 cases. *Dark garnet color in the glass. aromas of blackberry syrup, pomegranate, toasty oak along with some bruised apple volatile acidity. Loaded with sweet purple and black berry fruit and tannin. Linear, with a sweetness tone and a modest finish. Drink up.* **88, 2014 93**

2012 Antiquum Farm Juel Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of blackberry, black currant, root beer and tilled earth. Loaded with very ripe and sweet dark fruits. Tannins are evident but not imposing. Finishes on a richly-fruited note. May be ever so slightly corked. Drink up to 3 years.* **90, 2014 91**

2012 Van Duzer Bieze Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Alluring aromas of black cherry compote, new leather, sweet pipe smoke and subtle toasty oak. Rich and ripely fruited in a mid-weight plus style, displaying black cherry and black raspberry fruits and a shadow of toasty oak in the background. Suave in texture with a decent finish. Impressive age ability. Drink now to 5 years.* **93, 2015 94**

2012 WildAire Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Deep aromas of dark cherry with a campfire (oak) accent. Black cherry is the featured fruit taste but is dominated by well-toasted oak. Mild tannins with good acidity that propels a juicy finish. A bit of alcoholic heat is evident on the finish. Drink up.* **89, 2014 94** (“aroma of smoky oak”)

2012 Winter's Hill Estate Reserve Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 138 cases. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of oak-kissed black cherry and elderberry with a touch of barnyard. The purple and black berry fruit floods the palate with goodness. The sweetness and heft of the fruit reflect a warm vintage. Enough tannin so that the wine is still going strong. Drink now or within 5 years.* **92, 2014 91**

2012 Harper Voit Bieze Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of black cherry and black raspberry evolve over time in the glass. Impressive longevity, with a mid-weight plus core of fresh black raspberry and pomegranate fruit flavors. Long in the mouth, with restrained tannins and a pleasant, quenching finish. Drink now to 5+ years.* **93, 2014 92**

2012 Harper Voit Antiquum Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of blackberry jam and savoury spice. Full-bodied, with a charge of well-spice, sweet black cherry flavor. Complimentary tannins have preserved the wine that offers a generous finish. Drink now to 5 years.* **92, 2014 90** (“long and generous finish”)

2012 Coeur de Terre Reserve Renelle's Block McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of blackberry, black plum and exotic spices. Mid-weight plus in heft, with prominent tannins overwhelming the remaining black fruits. The perfume of anise and scorched fruit are featured on the astringent finish. Drink up.* **87, 2014 90-91** (“substantial tannins”)

2012 Hyland Estates Coury McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Very nice array of aromas including cherry, strawberry, raspberry and baking spices. Elegant in style, offering the essence of juicy red and black berry fruits framed by moderate tannins. The wine ends on a very agreeable thirst-quenching note. Drink now to 5 years.* **92, 2015 94**

2012 Hyland Estates McMinnville Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of strawberry, wilted rose petal and sawdust. Impressive life for an AVA blend, with earth-toned flavors of red cherry and raspberry. An enjoyable lighter quaff. Drink up.* **89, 2015 90**

2012 Broadley Vineyards Shea Vineyard Yamhill-Carlton Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of spiced blackberry, earth and oak. Mid-weight plus in style, with a core of husky blackberry, pomegranate and earthy flavors. Upbeat, still showing a good amount of vibrant fruit with a juicy finish. Reflective of Yamhill-Carlton earthiness. Drink now to 3 years.* **92, 2014 95**

2012 Broadley Vineyards Claudia's Choice Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with scents of cherry, strawberry and cardamom spice. Still showing good life with a mid-weight core of dark fruits supported by a good spark of acidity and healthy tannins. The finish offers good length and intensity. Drink now to 5 years.* **92, 2014 89** (“will benefit from aging”)

2012 Broadley Vineyards Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of a crushed berry medley. Flavors of blackberry, Marionberry, cassis and licorice in a mid-weight style. Linear, with notable tannins and a mildly astringent finish but with good underlying acidity. Dense fruit lacks charm. Drink up.* **90, 2014 94** (“big boy wine that has the structure to age”)

2012 Antica Terra Antikythera Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc.
Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of tilled soil, ash, campfire and fruit on the grill. Uninspired flavors of dark red cherry and berry with juicy acidity and modest tannins. Oak has overtaken what fruit is left. Drink up. 85, 2015 94 (“a whisper of oak chimes in”)

Findings & Impressions:

1. There were more disappointments than surprises in the ten-year-old Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs from the 2012 vintage. About half of the wines scored significantly lower over time, some markedly so.
2. Issues with the older wines included faded fruit, oak creep, more apparent faults, and overall decrepitude.
3. About one-third of the wines scored about the same as a previous review several years ago and only two wines scored noticeably higher.
4. The results one must take into account bottle variation and the vagaries of wine scoring.
5. Although I did predict age ability and the value of cellaring in a few wines, this was not a consistently reliable suggestion.
6. Most wines lacked well-aged, and appealing tertiary characters.
7. Based on this relatively small sample, I would not suggest cellaring the 2012 vintage Pinot Noirs for future consumption.
8. The results in this survey must take into account vintage differences and do not reflect the age ability of all vintages of Willamette Valley Pinot Noir.

Various Pinot Noirs Recently Tasted

2019 Big Table Farm Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 12.8% alc., 2,503 cases, \$48. Produced and bottled by Big Table Farm, Gaston, OR. Sourced from nine sites. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Deep aromas of black cherry, blackberry and dark chocolate with a hint of pipe smoke and barnyard. Discreetly concentrated core of black cherry fruit with some spice and a hint of smokiness. Satin in tone, with integrated tannins and a modest but satisfying finish.* **89**

2019 Big Table Farm Pelos Sandberg Vineyard Eola-Amity Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 243 cases, \$64. BTF has worked with the same rows in this vineyard for ten years. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very inviting aromas of black cherry, tilled earth, wilted rose and grilled beef. The flavors of black cherry and raspberry draw your attention. There is a thread of barnyard noted that is typical of Pelos Sandberg Vineyard. Very silken in texture, nicely balanced, with the vibrant fruit holding court with intensity through the splendid finish. Nuanced and reflective of a unique terroir.* **93**

2019 Broadley Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 2,800 cases, \$22. A blend of fruit from Broadley Estate Vineyard, Open Claim Vineyard, Zenith Vineyard and Mailaris Vineyard. 100% de-stemmed, wild yeast fermentation in open-top stainless steel 4.5 ton and 1.5 ton plastic fermentor bins. Aged in neutral French oak barrels for 10 months. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, savoury spice, spearmint and a rub of oak. Light in style, with flavors of red cherry, cranberry, dried herbs and tobacco. Forward-drinking, with juicy acidity and a shallow finish.* **88**

2018 De Ponte Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc. \$48 (Wine Club \$38). *I recently bought some 2018 De Ponte Pinot Noir wines to drink as this is one of my favorite Oregon producers. Suzanne Baldwin Oliver handled my order and added a bottle of this wine as a gift and I was really surprised how good it was. A superb appellation value bottling with plenty of well-spiced, black cherry goodness with a hint of complimentary oak in the background. No rough edges in a middleweight style with exquisite balance. Goes down very easy. Did I mention this is an extraordinary value in Pinot Noir! This was a pre-release as part of a special 2018 vintage promotion and is part of a Wine Club shipment currently. Most of the 2018 Pinot Noirs will be released by this summer.* **92**

2017 Intent Home Block Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 34 cases, \$42, wax closure. Released February 2020. Produced and bottled by Intent Wines LLC, Healdsburg, CA. Sourced from Filigreen Farm and specifically the Home block that has some of the oldest vines on the Farm that is Demeter® certified biodynamic. 100% Pommard clone. Aged 14 months in neutral oak. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Tasted two bottles. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Both bottles had bruised apple (acetaldehyde) on the nose that persisted after opening. Aromas of cherry, spice and green herbs are also present. Light to mid-weight in style with flavors of cherry, raspberry and green herbs infused with vibrant acidity and backed by very modest tannins. Silky in texture with a short, hi-strung, acid-driven finish. Flawed, N/R*

2018 LOBO Wolff Vineyards Napa Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$N/A (not released). *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. It really took two days for this wine to fully open up. Aromas of ripe strawberry, cherrywood and underbrush. Both red and black fruits are evident but struggle to appear under daunting tannins initially. With time, the tannins became better integrated, the fruit took on a bold demeanor and the finish increased in length and appeal. Decanting will be required if drunk now but prudence would dictate a few years in the cellar. I hope to have a chance to re-taste in the future.* **90**

2019 Pfendler Vineyards Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 200 cases, \$45. Produced and bottled by Pfendler Vineyards, Santa Rosa, CA. 100% Helgren Vineyard, the highest of Pfendler's three estate vineyards sitting at 2,200 feet on the mountain top above the fog line. Harvested at 24.7° Brix. 50% Swan and 50% Calera selections. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. Winemaker Erica Stancliff. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Alluring aromas of black cherry, sweet pipe smoke and barnyard. Richly appointed flavors of blackberry, cassis and black tea in a mid-weight plus style. Straightforward and fruit-driven, with modest tannins and a silky mouthfeel, leaving behind a little bitterness and the slightest sense of alcoholic heat.* **90**

I don't review Chardonnay any more but I must put in a plug for the **2019 Big Table Farm Wild Bee Willamette Valley Chardonnay**. This is one of the greatest values in domestic Chardonnay, bar none. I did not formerly review this wine but drank it over two days and it was terrific. Packed with citrus flavor, crisp and bright in demeanor, unplugged oak, with an uplifting finish. Satisfying in every way and a perfect aperitif or accompaniment to the dinner table. A blend of seven Chardonnay sites the winery works with from several appellations. Priced at \$30, this is an exceptional Chardonnay at any price. 1,155 cases available. Cool label with a wild bee drawing by April Coppini. **93**



2017 Furthermore Pinot Noirs: Many Vineyard Sources Leads to a Variety of Good Options But Some Inconsistency

Furthermore Wines occupies the former Graton Ridge Cellars tasting room, winery and estate vineyard in the Russian River Valley town of Sebastopol on Highway 116. Chad Richards manages the winery as an on-site owner and the winemaker for the 2017 vintages reviewed here was veteran Erica Stancliff.



I have reviewed Furthermore Pinot Noir wines annually since the 2008 vintage. Some vineyard sources have been the same since 2008 (Rosella's, La Encantada), while other vineyard sources have been added or sourced intermittently along the way. The vineyards are all premium sites with outstanding farming, and stretch from the Sta. Rita Hills in the southern coast of California, to the Santa Lucia Highlands in Monterey County, and to the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast in northern California. Directing farming and harvesting has to be a challenge with such a diverse palate of vineyards.

Furthermore wines are sold on the winery's website at www.furthermorewines.com and through the comfortable indoor/outdoor tasting experience. All wines reviewed here are produced and bottled by Furthermore Wines in Sebastopol.

2017 Furthermore La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 120 cases, \$55. Vineyard planted in 1998 by Richard Sanford. Dijon clones 115, 667, 777. Certified organic. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Toasty oak overshadows the fruit aromas of ripest strawberry and black cherry. A husky, well-ripened core of blackberry and black raspberry fruit that displays proper acidity and noble tannins to balance the fruit load. Charming, with some length to the finish. My only nit is that the wine displays more oak overlay than I prefer. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, still showing a noticeable oak imprint. 90*

2017 Furthermore Sierra Mar Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 120 cases, \$55. Pommard 4 and Pisoni selection. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Highly aromatic,*

displaying scents of dark cherry, dark raspberry, blueberry-pomegranate, cola and spice. I thought I detected a very slight hint of Brett (sweaty horse) that was not off-putting. Mid-weight plus in concentration, offering super-ripe, luscious and sweet array of black stone and black berry fruits. There are hints of brown sugar and cocoa as well. Silky textured with buried tannins make for smooth going. Over time in the glass, the wine is less appealing as mostly a slug of fruit. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 90

2017 Furthermore Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 195 cases, \$60. Clones 115 and faux 828. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of black cherry and cigar box. A hedonistic wine packed with layers of over ripe fruit tastes of blackberry, cassis and prune. As big as Pinot Noir gets with a level of fruit ripeness that blocks out the usual red-fruited elegance of this vineyard. The wine finishes with a sense of alcoholic heat. 89*

2017 Furthermore Gap's Crown Vineyard Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., 290 cases, \$60. Clones 667 and faux 828. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant array of black stone fruit and dark berry aromas that really rise up over time in the glass. There are scents of rose petal and warm brioche as well. A deluge of black cherry and black raspberry fruit envelopes the palate and seems to linger for over 30 seconds on the finish. The fruit has a brightness with a citric edge particularly notable on the finish. Gap's Crown always delivers. 93*



2017 Furthermore Gioia Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 150 cases, \$60. Clone 113 and Pommard. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas of black cherry, spice cake and earthy flora unfold over time in the glass. Delicious flavors of black cherry, dark raspberry and dark strawberry backed by suede tannins and the slightest toasty oak. Silken in texture with good harmony and some persistence at the end. About the same when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 93*

2017 Furthermore Starbridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., 150 cases, \$60. Vineyard adjacent Summa Vineyard and vines were established by cuttings from Summa Vineyard. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, blueberry, black tea bag and seasoned oak. A hint of bruised apple (acetaldehyde) only present briefly upon opening. Mid-weight in style, with a core of citrus-toned red fruits framed by very modest tannins. The wine's acid is at the forefront showing a prominent citrus imprint on the mid-palate as well as a tart, citric finish. 88*

2017 Furthermore Nevina's Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 120 cases, \$75. Estate vineyard situated at 1,300 feet elevation. 777 and 667 clones. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of boysenberry, blackberry and black currant. The palate is greeted with a soothing flood of very ripe purple and dark berry fruit flavors. A big-fruited wine yet shows matching ripe tannins and well-integrated oak. Not as bombastic as other wines in the 2017 lineup, offering a more refined character. 93*

2017 Furthermore Gloria Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 192 cases, \$55. Calera, Swan and 115 clones. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Perfumed with scents of black cherry, tobacco oak and tilled earth. Mid-weight plus in style, offering flavors of*

herb-dusted cherry and green herbs. A bright arrow of acidity pervades the wine creating a sweet and sour finish. The wine leans too much on oak and finishes only modestly. 89

2017 Furthermore Graton Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., 243 cases, \$55. Dijon clones planted in 2003. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Really nicely perfumed with aromas of ripe Bing cherry, olallieberry pie, and black grape. Discreetly concentrated and suave in the mouth, with a core of dark cherry and black raisin flavors with added notes of black tea, dark chocolate and cassis. Smoky oak plies the background. 90*

2017 Furthermore Alchemy Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 169 cases, \$85. A cuvée of Furthermore vineyard sources. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black raspberry, worn leather, prune, brown butter and medicine cabinet. Mid-weight plus in style, with a core of very ripe black cherry and blackberry fruits accented with spice. A literal fruit bomb with proportional tannins, a compliment of oak and some length and generosity on the finish. 90*

Wine Briefs

IN MY HUMBLE BUT EXPERIENCED OPINION, THE 2018 VINTAGE OF CALIFORNIA AND OREGON PINOT NOIR IS THE GREATEST VINTAGE OF THE CENTURY. STOCK UP!

The Addictive Perfume of Pinot Noir The nose outmatches the tongue's taste buds when it comes to driving our drinking decisions. While there are 10,000 taste buds, there are 10 million olfactory receptors, and they can detect literally hundreds of scents. Flavor is the combination of taste and smell but the most credit should go to smell. Both orthonasal and retronasal pathways excite our olfactory receptors. The drive to experience the perfume of Pinot Noir becomes a repetitive behavior that some people find very difficult to quit and thus can be defined as an addiction. Once someone is enthralled with Pinot Noir, they are hooked. The phenomenon can be explained scientifically by the workings of the right frontal brain region. This site in the brain is where both the olfactory system and our emotional center are located, and is where a number of addictive behaviors originate. The smell of Pinot Noir modifies the physiological and psychological nerve functions in the anterior frontal brain, causing a hopeless addiction to Pinot Noir. Once the perfume of Pinot Noir has taken hold, the sufferers are constantly searching for that tantalizing smell, always dreaming of the concentrated cherry, jammy strawberry, spice, musk, earth, truffles and barnyard perfume. Canadian writer Konrad Ejbich once said, "It (Pinot Noir) is heaven in a glass, smell like great sex and tasting like the ripest strawberries, raspberries and black cherries all at once."



Gust Wines Debuts Megan and Hilary Cline, part of the second generation at Cline Family Cellars, have announced the debut release of Gust Wines from the Petaluma Gap. Megan and Hillary's father, Fred Cline, planted vineyards in the Petaluma Gap in the late 1990s, before the area gained renown and became the Petaluma Gap AVA. Gust Wines was born in 2017 when Megan and Hilary decided direct attention to producing cool-climate wines from their family's Petaluma Gap vineyards. They chose specific blocks within the Catapult Vineyard and Diamond Pile Vineyard, sustainably farmed them with great care dialing in characters that they deemed special. The name, 'Gust' conveys the atmosphere of the Petaluma Gap, where like clockwork, morning fog gives way to winds. The winemaker is Tom Gendall, a veteran of wineries in New Zealand and Germany before joining the Cline team in 2016. The inaugural 2017 releases are a 2017 vintage Pinot Noir (\$48), Chardonnay and Syrah. Visit www.gustwines.com for more information.

Women and Wine: How Alcohol Affects Female Health This is the title of an excellent summary article published in January, 2018 by *Wine Spectator* at :www.winespectator.com/articles/how-alcohol-affects-female-health. I only recently came across this article but it is still relevant and apropos for Woman's History Month 2021. On the positive side, moderate drinking of alcohol increases bone density in women, significantly reduces the incidence of cardiovascular disease in postmenopausal women and lower risk of sudden cardiac death, and leads to a lower risk of suffering from dementia. A 2016 study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that having one to seven drinks per week had no effect on a woman's ability to conceive. But there are risks, particularly if drinking exceeds "moderation." Having more than one drink a day increases the risk of developing breast cancer.



Insect Sex Pheromone Formulation Protects Argentina's Vineyards Using a control strategy called "mating disruption," the Argentinians have used it effectively to control the highly damaging European grapevine moth without insecticides. Aircraft and drones apply a non-toxic, biodegradable pheromone formulation to vineyards and nearby environs. The formulation droplets emit a synthetic version of the same sex pheromone the female moths release in nature to call the males to mating. When males follow the scent of the applied pheromone, they become hopelessly confused and fail to find the willing females. Most moths live out their life without producing offspring. The next generation of hungry caterpillars never hatch and the grapevines thrive.

Butterfly Sanctuary at Jordan Winery Indoor dining and tasting rooms are expected to open April 1 so time to plan your trip to wine country. Jordan Winery's 1,200-acre estate in the Alexander Valley now has an 8-acre sanctuary for endangered bumble and mason bees and monarchs and other butterflies. A 3-hour-guided tour rambles through the estate, followed by a picnic lunch with Jordan wine. Bookings are to begin April 1 with the first tours available on Earth Day, April 22. Cost is \$110 per person. Tastings at the winery will resume May 1. Also, a prix fixe bistro lunch is available served on the estate's Terrace. Visit www.jordanwinery.com.

Alcohol Linked to Lower Risk of Cataracts As a retired ophthalmologist who has performed thousands of cataract surgeries, a British study caught my eye (no pun intended). Academics from the world-famous Moorfields Eye Hospital and the University College London's Institute of Ophthalmology found that people who consume up to 14 units of alcohol (about 6.5 glasses) a week have less chance (up to 23% less risk) of developing cataracts and requiring cataract surgery, especially if they drink red wine. Abstainers were afforded no protection from cataract surgery. The study suggests a protective role of polyphenol antioxidants, which are abundant in red wine.

INNsider Access Series The Farmhouse Inn in the Russian River Valley is partnering with member wineries of the West Sonoma County Vintners in offering very limited, private experiences that highlight the bounty of a specific Sonoma County AVA each season. The day's itinerary starts with a morning in a vineyard following by an exclusive tasting. The experience will then continue with seasonal customized, private farm tours and tastings, with privileged access to some of Sonoma County's best cheesemakers, growers and vintners and a two-night stay at the luxury inn. One of the premier partners is Paul and Kathryn Sloan's Small Vines. Details and sign-up will be forthcoming at www.westsonomacoast.com.

May is Anderson Valley Pinot Month The Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association is throwing a month-long party in 2021. Limited edition cases of Pinot Noir from Anderson Valley producers - the inaugural collection in support of the event - will be available (only 36 will be offered at \$369). There will be weekly webinars with winemakers, winegrowers, chefs and Master Sommeliers. Wine is not required to join the discussions. The main event, Passport to Pinot Weekend, takes place throughout the Anderson Valley from May 14-16. For more information about Anderson Valley Pinot Month, visit www.avwines.com. Note: The Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival will return in 2022.

IPNC's Brighter Days Virtual Auction This auction raises funds to support the future of the IPNC which was not held in 2020 and will be virtual in 2021. Silent bidding begins April 8 and runs through April 12. Plus, a special LIVE Auction benefitting the IPNC's Brighter Days Fund is set for Saturday, April 10, at 5:00 pm PDT. I am participating in a Guided California Petaluma Gap Stay and Tour along with Ana Keller of Keller Estate. The unique auction item includes a 2-night stay at Keller Estate for 2 couples, a special tour of Keller Estate vineyards and tasting of Keller Estate wines, and a Prince-led extensive tasting of Petaluma Gap Pinot Noirs along with winemakers. Other surprises will be added. Register for bidding at <https://ipncbrighterdaysauction.ggo.bid>.



Identifying Smoke Taint in Wine Early-On A South Australian researcher has devised a quick, easy way to detect smoke taint in grapes and wine. The tool could detect volatile compounds such as phenols that cause undesirable ash, burnt or medicinal flavors in wine. Existing techniques to identify smoke taint are expensive and laborious. The tool uses "specialised nanofabrication techniques." A beam of white light is shone through a sample of grape juice or wine and the measured spectral shifts in the light spectrum can indicate the presence of smoke taint molecules. The device has not been validated and is at the proof-of-concept stage. This proposed technology could be transformative for the wine industry. Read more at www.createdigital.org.au.

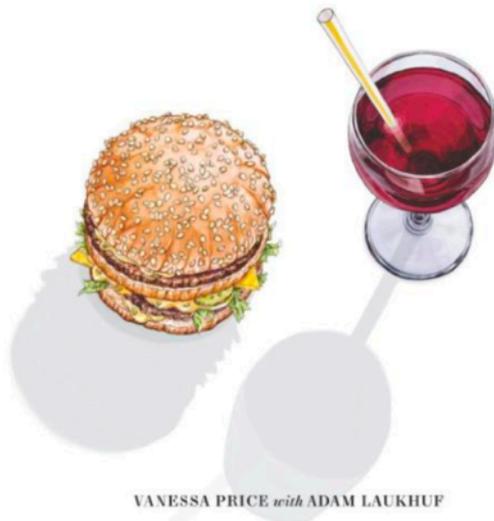
Pigs & Pinot Cooking Class Series Four Pigs & Pinot cooking sessions by Charlie Palmer are planned. Learn valuable cooking techniques, wine pairing tips, and a special Pigs & Pinot-inspired recipe from Charlie. Each class is a 45-60 minute live zoom demonstration plus Q&A. Each session has a suggested wine pairing and exclusive wine offers are available. The dates are April 9,

April 29, May 27, and June 24, all at 4:00 pm PST. Tickets for one are all sessions (\$75-\$240) are available through www.eventbrite.com.



Big Macs & Burgundy

WINE PAIRINGS *for the REAL WORLD*



VANESSA PRICE *with* ADAM LAUKHUF

Big Macs & Burgundy: The BEST Wine Book I Have Read in a Long Time

This is a terrific book on wine that I have read twice. This book presents wine varietal knowledge in very understandable terms, suggests perfect pairings of common foods and wines, and does all this in the context of the writer's life experiences in wine, tales that often led me to laugh out loud. There is no pretentiousness to be found anywhere in this book.

Vanessa Price, who authored this book along with Adam Laukhuf, has worked in many sides of the wine industry in addition to writing a wine column for *New York Magazine* that became the catalyst for the book. The result is a plethora of food and wine pairing suggestions and ideas for the readers to create their own pairings. There is an emphasis on the consumer experimenting and understanding that there are no wrong pairings. There are many practical wine tips as well regarding decanting wine, storing wine safely, and winegrowing methods.

I tried out some of the suggested pairings. Big Macs are a suggested pairing for red Burgundy, but I found California Pinot Noir works equally well. I happen to love to snack on Cheez-Its, especially the Extra Toasty version, so I tried the recommended white Priorat from Spain and I agree the result was unami Xanadu. I had a bottle of Calera Viognier in my cellar and tried it with the recommended Mac & Cheese and this pairing was right on, with the creamy, low-acid Viognier cutting the sharpness of the cheese and providing a creamy comfort to the pasta.

Keep this book in your kitchen as a handy reference. Although you won't have all the suggested wines in your home cellar, the majority of them are readily available through your local retailer or market.

Big Macs & Burgundy is available on Amazon in paperback for \$20.49 or Kindle for \$9.99 (almost all 5-star reviews). Published by Harry N. Abrams in 2020, 240 pages, nicely illustrated.