

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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2007: 'Off The Charts'...

IN THE COURSE OF PREPARING MY ANNUAL HARVEST REPORT, I do a lot of research. I talk to and/or correspond with a lot of vintners about harvest conditions and ask them for their very preliminary take on where they think quality is headed. I also taste as much very young Pinot as I can.

The goal here, of course, is **NOT to make a final, definitive statement** about the quality of a vintage, especially one whose wines are just now starting their development phase. And that goal is kept firmly in mind while I'm tasting through some very young components of the wines that will eventually be made. The goal is to put the vintage at this stage into perspective with previous vintages.

Naturally, there's a lot of hype and enthusiasm surrounding a new vintage—a lot of it is simply the rush following the completion of a very intense period of hard work; some of it in some years can be a little bit of wishful thinking.

So when I get an email from **Ken Brown**, he had my full attention. Ken probably has one of the longest continuous histories of Pinot production in California, beginning with the mid-to late-1970s at **Zaca Mesa Winery**, then on to a couple of decades founding and running **Byron Vineyards & Winery** and now owner of his own **Ken Brown Wines**, a new Pinot venture based in the Santa Rita Hills. Ken told me: "This is my 31st vintage of making Pinot Noir and **I can honestly say that this is the best quality vintage I have ever seen by far.**"

He was not alone in that assessment. **2007 is definitely a vintage to watch.**

Elsewhere in this issue, I've got some terrific wines to share with you. Newcomers, or relative newcomers include **John Tyler, Kindred Wines, Segue Cellars** and **Valerie's Vineyard**. I've also tasted some terrific Pinots from the names you already know and love including **King Estate, Kosta Browne, Lynmar, Merry Edwards, Russian Hill Estate** and **Testarossa Vineyards**.

Also, please take a look at Pinot Events, where I do a wrap-up on the **2007 Pinot On The River Festival** and tell you about some other upcoming events.

As always, I thank you for your support and hope that you enjoy this latest issue.

-- Gregory S. Walter, editor and publisher



WINNER

James Beard Award For Newsletter Writing On Food, Beverage, Restaurants and Nutrition

2007 Pinot Vintage Roundup

Vintners Up And Down The Coast Report: The Best They've Seen...

WITH THE 2007 HARVEST FOR PINOT NOIR COMPLETE up and down the West Coast, the upshot from the dozens of vintners I've spoken or corresponded with over the past 30-60 days is that the 2007 vintage of West Coast Pinot Noir could be the best in many years.

But as usual, there's good news and bad news. I don't know about you, but I always want the bad news first.

The bad news is that overall the West Coast Pinot Noir crop for 2007 is down anywhere from 20 percent to 30 percent or more, depending on the region. We'll know the actual numbers when the final crush reports are issued.

The good news, and this is across the board, is that the quality of the 2007 vintage for Pinot Noir is for many vintners simply stunning. Now, all of us are used to a little post-harvest enthusiasm, but after tasting a bunch of very early wines and talking with a lot of vintners, I can tell you that this vintage is clearly the real deal. **Expect some absolutely amazing 2007 Pinot Noirs.**

What follows are comments solicited from vintners up and down the West Coast, roughly geographically north to south—from the Willamette Valley in Oregon to the Santa Rita Hills in California.

Harry Peterson-Nedry, Chehalem Wines Newberg, OR (Willamette Valley)

"This has been a damp year, but still not in the league with the last very difficult rain-affected year, 1997. Rainfall has been the prime mover this harvest... but with less impact in my assessment than we would have guessed just from rainfall amounts. Fruit is largely nicely ripe, but with reduced sugar levels, which will equate to lower alcohols.

"The characteristics of this vintage for Pinot Noir will be less alcohol, less blackness, more finesse rather than extraction, possibly even better ageability, and more memories of being

miserable in cool and damp conditions, memories that will fade as the wines in barrel warm us."

Michael Browne, Kosta Browne Sebastopol, CA (Russian River Valley)

"2007 is shaping up to be our best vintage yet in my opinion. The flavor and intensity is like nothing I have ever seen. Although the wines are intense, they hold onto the elegance and finesse of Pinot Noir. The pH levels are superb and should lead to exceptional balance and longevity.

"This is my 31st vintage of making Pinot Noir and I can honestly say that this is the best quality vintage I have ever seen by far....."

Ken Brown, Ken Brown Wines

"The main factor affecting quality this year is the small cluster and berry size. This is due in large part to the relatively dry winter with a low level of moisture in the ground in the spring. The vines were less vigorous leading to the smaller size. The smaller sized clusters also contributed to a small yield. My initial goal was to harvest 200 tons of Pinot Noir. When I realized the crop was going to be smaller I increased my tonnage to 235 tons based on average yields. Our final tonnage turned out to be 187 tons. We were also able to pick at a lower brix level while obtaining physiological maturity."

Ben Papapietro, Papapietro Perry Winery Healdsburg, CA (Russian River Valley)

"2007 harvest was our earliest harvest yet. 75 percent of our fruit was in by the Sept. 12. The grapes were the best I've seen—very dark juice in the fermenters. The smells of blackberry jam and pie coming from the fermenters made my mouth water.

"The big surprise is the quality of the fruit—very balanced with low pH and good acidity, almost textbook numbers. We picked somewhat earlier to keep the alcohol levels in the low

OUT IN PINOT COUNTRY: 2007 Harvest Report

14% area. We have been very lucky to get almost all the fruit we were expecting. I have heard that some wineries have been shorted as much as 50 percent.”

Eric Stern, Landmark Vineyards Kenwood, CA (Sonoma Valley)

“I think [that 2007] is potentially a great vintage. I am struck by the ripeness and balance of the wines at what has to be considered, by California standards, relatively lower alcohols. This isn’t something I strove for in picking decisions, it simply happened. The lower cropping level in most vineyards has also contributed to good concentration and intense flavors.

““As good as 2005 and 2006 were, I believe the quality across the board is going to be even better this year...”

Augie Hug, Hug Cellars

“Of course, the wines need to complete malolactic fermentation before their true identities will be revealed, but the structure, flavors and balances seem to be there for great wines. Another key factor was the complete ease of all the fermentations. No sluggishness or off aromas. This was in part due to the lower Brix numbers, but also relatively high nutritional status of the fruit.”

Kent Fortner, Green Truck Cellars Napa, CA (Carneros)

“I tell ya, 2007 is the best I’ve ever seen. Now, I haven’t been around THAT long, but I have overheard even some of the old timers talking about how special this vintage is. I equate harvest every year to making a sauce in the kitchen. The sauce is always at its best just before it ‘breaks’ from being overcooked. This year, I swear, everything ripened, fermented, and finished fermenting just on the glorious side of this breaking point.

“Botrytis was at a minimum, the yields (much to the chagrin of a few vineyard-owners) were way down, which meant intensity is way up. We had just enough heat and sun to get things ripe, but not so much that color or flavor headed out the door. There was a small heat strike, but it seemed that the vines, after such a cool, long, forgiving ripening season, handled it in

stride. The only ding I can possibly come up with is that I wish stems had been a little more brown. I typically keep them out of the fermenter unless they are brown, and this year they just never browned up. But, that is only one small blemish in an otherwise picture-perfect crush season for me.”

Augie Hug, Hug Cellars Paso Robles, CA (various appellations)

“As good as 2005 and 2006 were, I believe the quality across the board is going to be even better this year. In general, yields are down due to late frosts in the spring causing berry shatter. Unfortunately that same condition has made it so that there is [especially] very little of the Rancho Ontiveros Vineyard available.”

Lane Tanner, Lane Tanner Winery Santa Maria, CA (Santa Maria Valley)

“The cold spring stunted many Pinot Noir vines and caused major ‘hens and chicks.’ [This and] the really cold winter resulted in a very small crop—not quite as bad as 1995, but it comes in second since I started in 1984.”

Wes Hagen, Clos Pepe Estate Lompoc, CA (Santa Rita Hills)

“The flavors for 2007 are insane and rich, and for those who picked in time, wonderfully balanced with lower alcohols. Quality [is] looking stellar. Stuff ripened up really fast right at the end of September, but not due to heat stress, just because the vines were about done and we finally turned off the water. Low yields and full ripeness have made the must in the fermenters gorgeous, aromatic, spicy—like plum and berry soup with baking spices. The wines from the Santa Rita Hills and Clos Pepe Vineyard in particular might just raise the bar.”

Ken Brown, Ken Brown Wines Lompoc, CA (Santa Rita Hills)

“This is my 31st vintage of making Pinot Noir and I can honestly say that this is the best quality vintage I have ever seen by far. The Santa Maria Valley and the Santa Rita Hills wines are very dark with great aromatics and flavors. We finished picking Pinot Noir on Oct. 10 and unloaded the grapes into the winery one hour before it began raining. I got lucky on this vintage.”

[PNR]

What To Buy, What to Drink...

WE HAVE HAD A RUN OF SOME VERY INTERESTING VINTAGES so far this decade. This is a brief look at the vintages from 2006 back to 2000—where they are and how I think that they will develop.

2006

OREGON: My impression of the Oregon 2006s I've tasted—mostly pre-release at this point—is that they parallel a lot of the 2006 California Pinots I've tasted. They are a very pleasant combination of the best of the 2004 and 2005 vintages. Great structure, but also a great core of deep fruit with a lot of complexity and nuance. They get a solid “buy.”

CALIFORNIA: Combines the forward, beautiful flavors of 2004 with the great structure of the 2005s. Some terrific Pinots are going come from this vintage and it was an above average harvest in terms of quantity. Some of these wines are just beginning to hit the market, so get the checkbook ready.

2005

OREGON: Definitely my favorite vintage in Oregon so far. Great structure, great balance, incredibly deep and complex flavors. The wines drink well on release but have years ahead of them. The best are among the best Oregon Pinots I've ever had and 2005 gets a serious “buy while you can.”

CALIFORNIA: In my opinion, the best vintage in California for Pinot this decade so far. Amazing structure and balance, incredible flavor and depth at lower alcohol levels; but the standout feature for me is the terrific structure of the wines. These are wines that will age well in the cellar, but because of their beautiful core of fruit and balance, drink well now. Buy what you can, while you can!

2004

OREGON: Balance and depth are keys to this vintage. Complex, deep and interesting, this is another star vintage for most Pinot makers in Oregon. The best get better and better.

CALIFORNIA: Big, intense, voluptuous Pinots with great

cores of fruit, lots of forward complexing notes—these are Pinots that are delicious to drink. Many have a good deal of time ahead, but why wait?

2003

OREGON: Solid, delicious Pinots, some a bit overdone; the best producers did well and made wines that are drinking well and should age well. If these are in your cellar, it's time to assess where they are.

CALIFORNIA: In some ways an overlooked vintage, following after 2002. Amazing depth with a leaner palate profile than 2002, these are drinking well now. If you have '03s in the cellar, check 'em out.

2002

OREGON: Great wines with depth and terrific structure. One of the best in recent memory; the best wines are just now beginning to open up and show what they have. Taste and evaluate what you have; the best have more time ahead.

CALIFORNIA: Big, rich, deep wines with amazing cores of fruit and strong structure. Most have great balance and depth; easily the best wines to date and a new high for California Pinot. Many are drinking really well, some need more time.

2001

OREGON: These are also elegant and interesting Pinots, many with some life still ahead. Ready to drink.

CALIFORNIA: Very elegant, leaner wines from the beginning; the best are just now coming into their own with significant secondary and tertiary characteristics from time in the bottle. Ready to drink.

2000

OREGON: Intense and deep early on with some variability due to rain late in the season, many of these are ready to drink.

CALIFORNIA: Initially, these Pinots felt a bit one dimensional to me, but having had a few in just the past six months, they've really blossomed. Most are ready to drink.

[PNR]

Smaller Can Definitely Be Better...

Pinot On The River Festival Gets Both Smaller And Better For 2007

TWO YEARS AGO, I WROTE THE FOLLOWING in issue #33 about the **Pinot On The River Festival**: “By just about any metric you might choose to apply, the second annual Pinot On The River Festival...was bigger and better than last year’s edition...” In one of those interesting twists of life I find myself thrilled that the **2007 Pinot On The River Festival**, held this past October 25-28, achieved the opposite—it was smaller in some very important aspects than previous editions.

So why was that a good thing? Because when **Eric Hall** and I conceived of this event we wanted it to be **an intimate event with lots of small group tastings, seminars and dinners** and lots of opportunity for people who love great Pinot to interact with those who make great Pinot. That’s hard to do when your group gets too big. We also wanted the event to **reflect the casual, rustic nature of Sonoma County**, even though we would be featuring Pinots from up and down the West Coast. That prompted the move to the event’s new home, **Russian River Vineyards** in the town of Forestville near the western edge of the Russian River Valley.

With the 2007 event, we worked very hard to bring **Pinot On The River** back to basics—back to the intimate, high-touch event we always intended it to be—and we think we definitely succeeded. Here’s a recap of this year’s event.

Thursday, October 25

Thursday kicked off the “pre-event events” that are the exclusive domain of our **Pinot On The River Founders Club**. This is a small group of serious Pinot lovers that signs up for even more Pinot action than our regular weekend attendees experience. The members of this select group are also, not surprisingly, **PinotReport subscribers**. The 40 or so Founders Club members and some vintner friends gathered

Thursday night for dinner at the **Pinot On The River “Farmhouse,”** the rustic house across Highway 116 from Russian River Vineyards that we rented as our “base of operations” for the weekend.

Dinner was conceived and prepared by **Chef Extraordinaire and PinotReport Contributing Editor Michael Dotson**. Michael has a new restaurant venture in San Francisco near the Ferry Plaza, **Sens Restaurant (www.sens-sf.com)**, that I would urge you to check out. Michael has, other than last year, been the creative genius behind this dinner and each year he seems somehow to kick it up to a new level. Despite some challenges beyond his knowledge and control, Michael created an amazing meal (see the menu on page 7). Also in attendance were four terrific Pinot vintners (and their wines): **Roger Roessler** of **Roessler Cellars**, **Gary Francioni** of **Roar Wines**, **Craig Haserot** of **Sojourn Cellars** and **Ben and Yolanda Papapietro** of **Papapietro Perry Winery**.

Friday, October 26

Bright and early Friday morning—OK, so 10:30 a.m. is not that early—the Founders Club set out via bus on a **day-long Pinot field trip** to visit and learn about the area known as the **Petaluma Gap**.

The Petaluma Gap is not a recognized AVA (American Viticultural Area), yet it is a **distinct sub-region** of the much larger **Sonoma Coast** AVA. It’s located roughly south of **Rohnert Park** along the western and eastern hills around the city of **Petaluma** and south into **Marin County**. The distinctiveness of this area, as with just about every other great Pinot region on the West Coast, is based in the very strong, cooling marine influence (both wind and fog). About 500 acres of grapes (mostly Pinot and Syrah) are grown and made into wine by about 50 vintners and growers. **The Petaluma Gap Grape and Wine Alliance** has been formed to promote the region (www.petalumagap.com).

We headed south from the **Russian River Valley** on **Highway 101** past the city of Petaluma. Our first stop was **Kastania Vineyard**, perched on a small hill, literally overlooking the highway on the west side of the Petaluma

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Valley. We were met by owners **Hoot and Linda Smith** and their winemaker **Leslie Sisneros**. The land, in the Smith family since the mid-1800s, was planted in the mid-1990s and Kastania Vineyard's first harvest was in 2001. After several years of selling their Pinot grapes, the Smith family decided to make their own wines. **We tasted their 2005 Estate and 2005 Proprietors Reserve Pinots**—both were rich and ripe with smoky cherry flavors and lots of depth. We enjoyed their Pinots—and a great no-oak Chardonnay—over a casual lunch with Hoot, Linda and Leslie and it was time to move on.

Our next stop was directly across the valley to the east in the low foothills southeast of Petaluma: **Keller Estate Winery**.

Keller Estate was founded by **Arturo and Deborah Keller**, and today is directed by **Ana Keller**. **Winemaker Michael McNeill** makes about 11,000 cases of **Pinot Noir**, **Chardonnay**, **Pinot Gris** and **Syrah** from estate vineyards.

After a tour of the architecturally impressive winery and barrel caves, we sat down in the tasting room to do a **blind tasting of the estate's Pinot Noir clones**. Winemaker Michael McNeill led the tasting, designed to show us the “clonal toolbox” he has to work with in creating the estate's Pinots. All of the clonal bottlings were from the 2005 vintage and included clones 115, 667, 777, 828, the Swan selection and a selection the winery calls “LT” (for La Tâche). After we had tasted through and discussed the wines, we tasted **the final blend of 2005 Pinot Noir** to see how Michael had pulled these very different clonal bottlings together into a terrific wine. We adjourned to the tasting bar and sampled a few of the other Keller Estate wines and then it was time to get on the bus and head back to get ready for dinner.

Friday Night Out In The Valley...

Our full weekend attendees headed out to **two offsite locations for dinner on Friday night**. I went with most of the Founders Club members to **Russian Hill Estate winery** located on a hill in the heart of the Russian River Valley. I was really looking forward to this dinner (they hosted the Founders Club Thursday night dinner back in 2005) not only because winery owners **Ed Gomez and Ellen Mack** and winemaker **Patrick Melley** are wonderful hosts and really know how to throw a great Pinot dinner, but also because their Russian Hill wines are really terrific. **Chef Dan Berman** (formerly of **Mixx Restaurant** in Santa Rosa) created a fabulous menu and paired it with a combination of Russian Hill new releases and library

wines (see the menu on page 7.). It was a great dinner with terrific food and wine and was topped off **with a wonderful Russian Hill Syrah Port**.

Saturday, October 27

The fog. It's probably the key component that makes Russian River Valley such a great place to grow Pinot Noir. It also makes **for chilly morning temperatures in the seminar tent** for the early session of seminars as Pinot On The River opened its Saturday program at **Russian River Vineyards**.

This year, we lightened up the seminar schedule a bit, offering a two-track program with one morning seminar session and one afternoon session, each offering two seminars.

The very chilly morning session started with a seminar moderated by **Christopher Sawyer**, a well-known wine journalist and sommelier taking a **focused look at the Russian River Valley**, the region that really started the California Pinot Noir renaissance. Christopher had a top-notch panel of experts to work with: **Ted Elliott** of **TR Elliott**; **Rod Berglund** of **Joseph Swan Winery**; **Ginny Lambrix** of **De Loach Vineyards** and **Rick Moshin** of **Moshin Winery**.

Next door, **I was moderating a seminar called “The Rising Stars of California Pinot Noir.”** I chose four vintners with varying degrees of experience in making wine, but with a **common thread of having launched new Pinot ventures or reinvented older ones** in such a way that I believed that they were on to something very special: **Erich Bradley**, winemaker for the new **Sojourn Cellars** and also the newly reinvented **Hop Kiln Winery**; **Jeff Stewart**, winemaker for the very reinvented **Buena Vista Carneros** winery; **Jonathan Pey**, owner and winemaker for **Pey-Marin**, one of several Pinot pioneers in western **Marin County**; and **Paul Clifton**, winemaker for the new **Lucienne** Pinot label from **Hahn Estates** in **Santa Lucia Highlands**.

After lunch, we launched into the afternoon seminars. Christopher Sawyer led **“Vineyard Focus: Bien Nacido Vineyard.”** Bien Nacido Vineyard and the Miller Family have been among the pioneers in growing great Pinot Noir in the Central Coast of California for decades. Co-moderating the seminar was **Nicholas Miller**, part of the family ownership of Bien Nacido. On the panel were several winemakers who make Pinot Noir from the vineyard: **James Ontiveros** of **Alta Maria Winery**; **Jeff Wilkes**, of **J Wilkes Wines**; **Adam**

2007 PINOT ON THE RIVER FESTIVAL SELECTED MENUS

Founders Club Welcome Dinner On The Eve Of The 2007 Pinot On The River Festival

Thursday, October 25, 2007

Chef Michael Dotson

*Executive Chef, Sens, San Francisco, California
Contributing Editor, PinotReport*

Menu

Appetizers

Vitelloni - Foie Gras Manti and Fenugreek Oil
Crispy Olives, Megueze and Toasted Almonds
Whipped Fava Beans and Za'tar Flatbread

Fig & Olive Stuffed Sole

Frikeh, Barley and Brussels Sprouts

Pastourma Roasted Wolfe Ranch Quail

Littleneck Clams, Escarole and Coriander

Grilled Oregon Lamb Kefta

Chickpea, Fennel and Olive Stew

Crispy Kataifi

Warm Myzithra Cheese, Quince and Pink Peppercorn

Wines

Papapietro Perry Sonoma Coast Peters Vineyard 2001-2004
Papapietro Perry Russian River Valley 2001-2004
Roar Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Pisoni Vineyard 2005
Roessler Cellars Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Savoy 2003
Sojourn Cellars Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo 2005

Pinot On The River Welcome Dinner At Russian Hill Estate Winery

Friday, October 26, 2007

Chef Dan Berman

Menu

On The Patio

Crostini with Brie and Tomato
Endive with Smoked Chicken Salad
Scallop and Melon Ceviche with Nappa Cabbage
Russian Hill Estate Chardonnay Gail Ann's Vineyard 2005

Wild Pacific Coho Salmon

with Warm Lentil Salad

*Russian Hill Estate Pinot Noir Meredith Vineyard 2005
Russian Hill Estate Pinot Noir Tara Vineyard 2005*

Seared Breast of Liberty Duck

with Red Thai Curry and Green Papaya Salad

Russian Hill Estate Pinot Noir Leras Vineyard 2003

Bistro Filet and Braised Short Ribs

with Chard, Butternut Squash, Mushrooms and Bacon

Russian Hill Estate Syrah Windsor Oaks Summit 2002

Chocolate Marquis

with Raspberry Coulis

Russian Hill Estate Syrah Port

LaZarre of **LaZarre Wines**; and **Bill Brosseau** of **Testarossa Vineyards**.

My afternoon panel was called "A Tale of Three Verticals" and as the title suggests focused on a mini-vertical tasting for each of three Pinot producers. Those three vintners were: **Leslie Sisneros** of **Arista Winery**; **Eric Hickey** of **Laetitia Vineyard & Winery**; and **Greg La Follette** of **Tandem Winery**.

Tasting Even More Pinot...

Following the afternoon seminars, we moved right into our walkaround "Pinot Noir Discovery Tasting." Full weekend attendees and selected members of the wine trade tasted

new and interesting Pinots from producers up and down the West Coast. **About 40 wineries participated** and most were showing their **as-yet unreleased 2006 Pinots**. Following this tasting, all attendees gathered at **Stella's Restaurant** at Russian River Vineyards for the **Saturday Grand Vintner Dinner**. We were treated to the wines of four sponsoring wineries—**HK Generations** (the new **Hop Kiln Winery**), **Kosta Browne**, **Laetitia Vineyard & Winery** and **Landmark Vineyards**. In addition, everyone seemed to produce a bottle of his or her own to slap down on the tables.

Sunday, October 28

The final day of the Pinot On The River weekend started with two morning seminars. These Sunday morning seminars

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are designed to be focused on a single small Pinot producer and give attendees the chance to taste and learn from these accomplished vintners. The first seminar was with Ross Halleck of Halleck Vineyard in Sebastopol. We started out tasting the Halleck 2006 Dry Gewurztraminer to “wake up” our palates. Then Ross walked us through a tasting of his terrific 2005 Pinots. The second seminar was with Ken Brown of Ken Brown Wines in the Santa Rita Hills. Ken, a veteran of 31 Pinot harvests in Santa Barbara County, is in the third vintage of his own new small label after a long stint as founder and winemaker at Byron Vineyards in Santa Maria Valley. Ken tasted us on his delicious, texture driven 2005 Pinots—all from the Santa Rita Hills.

The big event of the day began at noon—our walkaround Grand Artisanal Pinot Noir Tasting featuring more than 80 wineries pouring their current Pinot releases, library wines and special bottlings. More than 600 people attended this great afternoon of Pinot Noir. Though a bit crowded at times, it was a casual, fun end to the weekend.

The 2008 Pinot On The River Festival

Next year's Pinot On The River Festival is scheduled for Friday through Sunday, October 24, 25 and 26, 2008. It will be our fifth annual event and we will be celebrating that anniversary with some very special events. I'd urge you to mark your calendars and plan on attending. For more information or to purchase tickets for the event, visit www.pinotfestival.com.

UPCOMING PINOT EVENTS

San Francisco, CA

December 12, 2007: 2005 Pinot Noir Tasting. A comparative tasting of eight 2005 Pinot Noirs double blind with a discussion to follow. Producers include Aubert, Dehlinger and Williams Selyem. **Where:** Jim Gallagher's Wine Seminars, 1671 16th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122. **Time:** 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. **Price:** \$60.00. **Information:** email wine1035@sbcglobal.net.

Phoenix, AZ

December 14, 2007: Willamette Pinot Noir & Riedel. Join us for a tasting of four Pinot Noirs from the Willamette Valley in Oregon and receive a Riedel Pinot Noir glass for each paid

admission. **Where:** The Copa Habana Wines, 350 E. Bell Road, Suite 12, Phoenix, AZ 85022. **Time:** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. **Price:** \$25.00. **Information:** call 602.993.6800 or visit www.thecopahabana.com.

Los Olivos, CA

December 19, 2007: A Evening with the Winemaker: Peter Cargasacchi of Cargasacchi Vineyard. You are invited to rub elbows with one of the most interesting Pinot vintners in California as he presents five of his wines. **Where:** The Los Olivos Cafe & Wine Merchant, 2879 Grand Ave., Los Olivos, CA 93441. **Time:** 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. **Price:** \$15.00 (\$10.00 for wine club members). **Information:** call 805.688.7265 or visit www.losolivoscafe.com.

Coral Gables, FL

December 21, 2007: Pinot Noir Tasting. Come celebrate the holiday season, sample great Pinot Noir, eat latkes, light the menorah and spin the dreidel to celebrate the festival of lights. **Where:** Wolfe's Wine Shoppe, 124 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables, FL 33134. **Time:** 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. **Price:** \$20.00 (includes Riedel glass). **Information:** call 305.445.4567.

San Francisco, CA

December 29, 2007: Pinot Noir Tasting @ Blackwell's. Join us to taste Pinot Noir at the store Saturday afternoon. **Where:** Blackwell's Wines & Spirits, 5620 Geary Blvd., San Francisco, CA 94121. **Time:** 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. **Price:** \$10.00. **Information:** call 415.386.9463.

Signal Hill, CA

January 10, 2008: The Wines of Sherrer Winery. Join wine pro Curtis Craft and sample Fred Scherrer's Pinot Noir, Zinfandel Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. **Where:** The Wine Country, 2301 Redondo Avenue, Signal Hill, CA 90755. **Time:** 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. **Price:** \$8.00. **Information:** call 562.597.8303 or visit www.thewinecountry.com.

Salem, OR

January 11, 2008: Oregon Wine & Food Festival. Come to Salem for the Oregon wines, fine art, crafts & sculptures, premier food & cuisine. **Where:** Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th Street NE, Salem, OR 97303. **Time:** Various. **Price:** \$8.00. **Information:** call 503.390.7324.

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IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

This Issue's Tasting Notes

All wines were tasted blind and scored before knowing anything other than that the general region they were from. My notes and comments follow.

John Tyler

John Tyler is a new wine venture from two very old and established Russian River Valley wine families. John Bacigalupi and Tyler Heck are the two namesakes of this brand. The Bacigalupi family has been growing grapes on Westside Road since the 1960s when John's father, Charles Bacigalupi, planted Pinot Noir and Chardonnay at the suggestion of Tyler Heck's grandfather Paul Heck, whose family has owned Korbel Champagne Cellars since 1953. John provides the Pinot Noir fruit from his Bacigalupi Vineyard and Tyler makes the wines, and a deep partnership between two long-friendly families continues.

John Tyler

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2003

Medium-deep ruby color; black cherry and earthy aromas; big, full black cherry flavors with earthy notes, light-moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe and well structured, this Pinot has a lot to offer now and will gain with a little bottle age.

829 cases made \$42 Score: 91

Kindred Wines

Kindred Wines was founded in 2005 by close friends Kevin Carleton, Michelle Chen, Roberto Garces, Tim Halloran, Myung Kim, Peter Punongbayan and Vince Wong, several of

whom have worked actively in the food and wine industry. The Kindred brand was launched as part of Crushpad—the San Francisco-based custom and boutique winemaking service. Day-to-day winemaking is the charge of Roberto Garces with the help of two Crushpad consulting winemakers: Mike Zitzlaff and Kian Tavakoli. Kindred's first Pinot Noir release is a 2005 from the Amber Ridge Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. These guys are going to be serious Pinot producers so keep them on your radar screen.

Kindred Wines

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Amber Ridge Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; spicy, red cherry aromas with some earthy notes; rich and ripe, with a good core of red cherry fruit, spicy and earthy notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and spicy, this Pinot has terrific balance.

47 cases made \$45 Score: 93

King Estate Winery

King Estate is located in the Southern end of the Willamette Valley, southwest of Eugene, Oregon near the town of Lorane. Founded in the early 1990s by Ed King III and his father, Ed King Jr., the 1,033-acre wine estate specializes in Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris but does produce a few other varieties as well. The 110,000 square foot winery's design is based on a French chateau and the estate vineyards are located at elevations ranging from 800 to 1,100 feet. Winemaker Bill Kremer's Pinot offerings include the Signature Collection bottling—always a good value, some vineyard designated bottlings and the top of the line Domaine bottling.

King Estate Winery

Pinot Noir Oregon 2004

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 11.

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Amazingly deep and complex..."

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Kanzler Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; big, deep, complex aromas of black cherry, cassis and forest floor; deep, intense and opulent black cherry fruit, forest floor and earthy notes, some tannin, sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot is consistently the one from Kosta Browne that I like the best. Amazingly deep and complex, it's a definitive statement of Michael Browne's winemaking skill coupled with Steve and Lynda Kanzler's terrific vineyard.

500 cases made \$62 Score: 98

SMART BUY!

"Ripe and spicy..."

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2005

Medium ruby color; spicy, earthy aromas; rich and ripe with earthy and cherry flavors, spice and sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. A ripe and spicy Pinot that's also a great value.

1,499 cases made \$25 Score: 91

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Kosta Browne

There's no question that Kosta Browne is one of the hottest Pinot producers anywhere. Now in their seventh vintage together, founders Dan Kosta and Michael Browne are really hitting stride with a lineup of pretty amazing Pinots. After moving to Sonoma County from Washington state in 1987, Michael found himself working in local restaurants to pay the bills. He got seriously interested in wines and began his winemaking career working as an intern with Robert Rex at Deerfield Ranch Winery in the Sonoma Valley in 1997 and became co-winemaker there in 2000. At the same time, Michael's passion for Pinot Noir was growing and he soon teamed up with Dan Kosta, then wine director and head sommelier John Ash & Co. to launch Kosta Browne. Kosta Browne's Pinot bottlings include vineyard designates from Kanzler Vineyard and Miron Vineyard in Sonoma Coast; Amber Ridge Vineyard, Keefer Ranch and Koplen Vineyard in Russian River Valley and new for 2005, Garys' Vineyard and Rosella's Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Their excellent blends are Sonoma Coast, Russian River Valley and the 4 Barrel bottling. These Pinots just get better and better.

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir California 4 Barrel 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, intense cherry and earthy aromas; rich, complex red cherry and deep earthy and toasty oak notes, good structure and balance; long finish. This is a blend of the vintage's four best barrels—this year's blend is one each from Kanzler Vineyard, Miron Vineyard, Koplen Vineyard and Garys' Vineyard.

92 cases made \$62 Score: 95

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2005

Medium ruby color; rich spice and red cherry aromas; rich, ripe and pretty red cherry and spice flavors, very silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Beautiful silky texture and a great balance of fruit and structure mark this Russian River blend.

1,812 cases made \$45 Score: 94

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Amber Ridge 2005

Medium ruby color; rich aromas of tea, dried cherry and spice; ripe and rich with a deep core of dried cherry fruit with spice and tea notes; silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. The Pinots I've been tasting from the Amber Ridge Vineyard seem to be getting better and better and this bottling is no exception—rich and delicious, it's nearly everything you'd expect from Russian River Pinot.

510 cases made \$62 Score: 95

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Keefer Ranch Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; rich, red cherry, tea, and spice aromas; deep, rich and juicy cherry fruit, with spice and tea notes, very silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. The core of deep, juicy fruit in this Pinot is layered with lots of interesting tea and spice notes—it's a delight to drink all by itself.

117 cases made \$62 Score: 96

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Koplen Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spice, earth and berry aromas; rich, ripe, complex and deep blackberry, cherry flavors with some earthy notes; sweet oak and silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. This is an amazing Pinot from a young vineyard in the middle of Russian River Valley just off Olivet Road. Deep and layered with flavor, it's perfect for grilled meats.

500 cases made \$62 Score: 97

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, smoky cherry aromas; ripe, deep and complex earthy, smoky black cherry flavors; sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Big and rich with great depth and interesting flavors mark this first Garys' bottling.

264 cases made \$62 Score: 95

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy black cherry aromas with some smoky notes; rich, deep and ripe black cherry and plum flavors with spice and smoked bacon notes; silky texture, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. A deep and rich Pinot with flavors that just go on and on and yet still remain impeccably silky and balanced. This is Kosta Browne's first vineyard designate bottling of the Rosella's Vineyard.

255 cases made \$62 Score: 96

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep spicy, earthy black cherry aromas; rich, deep and complex black cherry and berry flavors, earthy forest floor notes, silky texture, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Kosta Browne's richly complex Sonoma Coast blend is really what a blend ought to be—the best characteristics of the four vineyards (Kanzler, Miron, Demeo and Duton-Manzana) that make it up.

1,821 cases made \$45 Score: 96

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Kanzler Vineyard 2005

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 9.

Kosta Browne

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Miron Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; intense and deep black cherry, spice and tea aromas; full, rich and complex spice and black cherry flavors with hints of tea and savory spices; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy and complex, this Pinot is from the Miron Vineyard, a small vineyard located at the southern end of the Green Valley AVA right in the cooling influence of the Petaluma Gap.

92 cases made \$62 Score: 95

Lynmar Winery

Lynmar Winery is the brainchild of Lynn Fritz, an expert in global logistics and humanitarian relief efforts. His family purchased Quail Hill Vineyard north of Sebastopol in the Russian River Valley in 1980. The winery was founded in 1990 and produced its first commercial Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in the 1994 vintage. Lynn Fritz's major retooling of the winery estate is really showing fruit now. Winemaker Hugh Chappelle has been immersed in making Pinot Noir for more than five years, but brings more than a dozen years of total winemaking experience to his current position as director of winemaking at Lynmar. Pinot bottlings include a Russian River blend and a Quail Hill Vineyard estate bottling.

Lynmar Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2004

Medium ruby color; spicy cherry aromas with some earth notes; rich and ripe with bright red cherry flavors, earthy and sweet oak notes; silky texture, good structure and balance; long

finish. Bright and rich, this Pinot has the flavor and balance to work with a wide range of foods.

2,674 cases made \$36 Score: 90

Lynmar Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Quail Hill Vineyard 2004

Medium ruby color; subtle red cherry, spice and a touch of earth on the nose; spicy, rich red cherry flavors with complex spice and earthy notes; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Elegant and subtle, this Pinot has classic Russian River character.

976 cases made \$50 Score: 92

Merry Edwards

Merry Edwards truly has a golden touch when it comes to Pinot Noir. Her winemaking career spans three decades and has had a consistent thread of Pinot Noir running through it. After switching from a graduate program in nutrition at UC Berkeley to the enology and viticulture program at UC Davis, Merry became one of the first female graduates to seek work as a winemaker. Her first winemaking position was at Mount Eden Vineyards in 1974, working for then consulting winemaker Richard Graff for three vintages. Merry moved on to help build Matanzas Creek Winery from the ground up and guided that brand for seven years. Merry left Matanzas Creek in 1984 to pursue new opportunities and to start a consulting business. In 1997 she co-founded Meredith Vineyard Estate Inc. and began searching for the best Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley Pinot Noir vineyards to provide the grapes for her Merry Edwards Pinots, as well as to plant and grow her own Pinot vineyards. The Meredith Estate vineyard is the culmination of her and husband Ken Coopersmith's work. Merry's Pinot bottlings include vineyard designates from the Olivet Lane, Meredith Estate and Klopp Ranch vineyards and regional blends from Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast. Her Pinots are full and rich, with a great core of deep cherry fruit, earthy notes and great structure for aging.

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Rich and complex..."

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Tara Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex earthy aromas with red cherry notes; deep, rich, complex red cherry flavors with earthy, forest floor notes; silky texture, lots of sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and complex, this Pinot is full of layered flavor and definitely needs time in the glass to open up and will also reward some time in the cellar.

395 cases made \$42 Score: 96

SMART BUY!

"Consistently delicious..."

King Estate Winery

Pinot Noir Oregon 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; earthy and ripe cherry aromas; deep, ripe cherry and earthy flavors, some spice; good structure and balance; lingering finish. This is a consistently delicious Pinot from King Estate that's also a great value.

15,100 cases made \$26 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Merry Edwards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2004

Medium ruby color; deep, rich aromas of red cherry and earth; rich and ripe, with red cherry, cola and spice flavors, sweet oak, earthy tannins; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and earthy, this Pinot is made for mushroom pasta.

3,290 cases made \$36 Score: 92

Merry Edwards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Klopp Ranch 2004

Deep ruby color; deep, complex earthy, black cherry aromas with a hint of rose petal; deep, rich and ripe dark cherry, earthy and spice flavors; some tannin and sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and deep, the layers of aroma and flavors in this Pinot really present themselves with at least an hour of air.

1,325 cases made \$51 Score: 93

Merry Edwards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Olivet Lane 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, spicy, aromas of cola and red cherry; rich and ripe, red cherry, spice and cola flavors, some tannin and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy and ripe Pinot from a historic vineyard in the middle of Russian River Valley.

835 cases made \$57 Score: 94

Merry Edwards

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2004

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, spicy black cherry, anise and earthy aromas; dense, full flavors with black cherry and anise flavors; earthy notes and some tannin and oak; good structure; long finish. Full and complex, this blend is a great amalgam of the cool-climate Pinot vineyards in western Sonoma County. Great with grilled or roasted meats.

1,650 cases made \$30 Score: 93

Merry Edwards

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Meredith Estate 2004

Deep ruby color; complex, deep, forest floor and black cherry aromas; big, full and earthy with black cherry flavors and forest floor notes; some tannin and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This is a big, deep Pinot but do not let its size fool you—there's amazing depth and nuance here as well. Make sure you give it plenty of air and let it open up.

910 cases made \$51 Score: 95

Russian Hill Estate

Ed Gomez and Ellen Mack began their journey in wine making Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay under the Benicia Cellars label in the Solano County city of Benicia. Both severely bitten by the wine bug, they wanted to continue

making wine, but also wanted to have a property that would be a suitable place to plant an estate vineyard. They established the Russian Hill Estate in 1997 on 21 acres of low hills in the middle of the Russian River Valley on Slusser Road. The property came with an estate house known to locals by the nickname "Tara" and from there came the name of their 20-acre estate vineyard. Planted in 1998 to Pinot Noir, Syrah and a small amount of Viognier (that's co-fermented with the Syrah), the Tara Vineyard is mostly east facing. Russian Hill has a second vineyard, Sunny View Vineyard, located on Guerneville Road approximately six miles south of the winery, with 15 acres planted to Pinot and five to Viognier. Ed's nephew, Patrick Melley, is Russian Hill's winemaker. Mostly self-taught, Patrick has really dialed in a Russian Hill style that's really all about a great core of fruit, balance and terrific texture and mouthfeel. Currently Russian Hill produces five bottlings of Pinot Noir, as well as Chardonnay, Syrah and a dynamite Syrah Port. The 2005 Pinots from Russian Hill are an great statement of the vintage—terrific balance and flavor melded with amazing structure that will reward some time in your cellar.

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2005

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 9.

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Estate 2005

Medium ruby color; spice and dusty cherry aromas; deep, rich spice and earthy flavors with dusty red cherry notes; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and rich, this Pinot calls out for roasted chicken or pork.

824 cases made \$32 Score: 94

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Leras Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy aromas with complex notes of red cherry and spice; deep, full and earthy with ripe red cherry and spice flavors, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and complex, the Leras Vineyard bottling combines silky, approachable fruit with great structure—it's a great choice both for current drinking and for additional time in the cellar.

144 cases made \$40 Score: 95

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Meredith Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; complex red berry and cherry aromas with lots of spice and floral notes; deep and complex with a lot of red cherry, earth and sweet oak flavors; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot has great aromas—the complex cherry, berry and floral notes just pull you into the glass. A deep and delicious Pinot.

273 cases made \$42 Score: 95

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Tara Vineyard 2005

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 11.

Segue Cellars

Stephen Yafa is a successful writer turned Pinot fanatic and commercial winemaker. His Segue Cellars is aptly named after that transition. He had been a home winemaker for many years and for years had wanted to make a commercial Pinot Noir. After meeting and spending time researching an article with Greg LaFollette, owner of Tandem Winery and a consulting Pinot-ologist and evangelist of some note, he was more determined than ever to make his own Pinot. He signed on as a cellar rat and worked under Greg's supervision to get the basics of commercial winemaking down. Then he asked Greg to be his "designated troubleshooter" and Segue Cellars was born. His Pinot bottlings include a Russian River Valley blend and a vineyard designate from the DuNah Vineyard in the southern end of the Russian River Valley. These are definitely Pinots to watch.

Segue Cellars

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy red cherry aromas with some pie spice notes; deep and rich with full red cherry, spice flavors and a touch of earthiness; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. A great example of Russian River Pinot, this is silky and spicy with a lot of interesting flavors.

50 cases made \$42 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Rob and Diana Jensen founded Testarossa in 1993 and quite literally have not looked back. Their passion for wine in general and Pinot Noir in particular has driven them to find and secure some of the best Pinot vineyard sources California has to offer and then deliver wines scoring among the highest anywhere. Neither Rob nor Diana have a winemaking or industry background. In fact, both have worked mainly in high-tech sales and marketing jobs in Silicon Valley. Rob developed his love of wine in his university days in Italy. Years later, he and Diana started Testarossa as a small weekend project. Today, they run the winery full time. Testarossa's winemaker is Bill Brosseau and the Pinot bottlings are sourced from vineyards up and down the West Coast. The Pinots are wonderful expressions of both the individual character of their vineyard sources and the Jensens' vision for Pinot.

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir California Cuvee Niciare 2005

Medium ruby color; earthy, cherry aromas; rich, bright cherry flavors, some spicy and sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, complex and spicy, this Pinot is a

great example of how good a regional blend can be.

195 cases made \$75 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Central Coast Palazzio 2005

Medium ruby color; deep stewed cherry and earthy aromas; complex stewed cherry flavors with earthy notes and sweet oak; good structure and balance, long finish. Another testament to winemaker Bill Brosseau's skill as a blender. Rich and distinctive, this Pinot works well with many dishes.

1,498 cases made \$37 Score: 92

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Graham Family Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy, earthy, cherry aromas; complex, rich and ripe with deep red cherry and earthy flavors; sweet oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, earthy and very interesting—this Pinot is a great statement of the vineyard.

90 cases made \$54 Score: 94

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy, smoky aromas; ripe and deep with earthy, smoky flavors and deep black cherry fruit; sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Smoky and deep, this is a deftly balanced and flavorful Pinot.

715 cases made \$59 Score: 93

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Pisoni Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy and slightly herbal aromas; ripe and full with deep black cherry, earthy and herbal flavors, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot with an interesting herbal note. Needs time in the glass to open up.

176 cases made \$65 Score: 93

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, smoky black cherry aromas with earthy and spice notes; rich, ripe and full smoky black cherry flavors and just a touch of smoked bacon; silky texture, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, smoky and complex, this Pinot is one more example of why Rosella's Vineyard is one of the best Pinot vineyards on the West Coast.

257 cases made \$59 Score: 94

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Sleepy Hollow Vineyard 2005

Medium ruby color; earthy, ripe cherry aromas; full and rich, with ripe cherry flavors, hints of earth and toasty oak notes; good structure and balance; lingering finish. Rich and full style with a nice core of earthy cherry flavor.

382 cases made \$59 Score: 91

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard Elder Series 2005

Medium ruby color; deep, spicy, red cherry and plum aromas with hints of pepper; rich, ripe, deep plum and red cherry; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Big, deep and complex, this Pinot is a great example of what the Santa Maria Valley can produce.

392 cases made \$56 Score: 94

Testarossa Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Sanford & Benedict Vineyard 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, black cherry and plum aromas with a touch of pepper; deep and broad black cherry and plum flavors, savory spices and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and complex, this Pinot is from one of the oldest and best Pinot vineyards in all of California.

558 cases made \$56 Score: 94

Valerie's Vineyard

Valerie's Vineyard is a joint venture of Sonoma public relations consultant Michael Coats, his wife Valerie, Chuck and Jerry Hanson of the Hi-Time Wine Cellars retail operation in Southern California (Valerie's parents) and Vicki Brown (Valerie's sister). The vineyard is one acre and organically farmed on the Sonoma side of the Carneros region. The first

vintage was 2003. The venture's winemaker is Tom Montgomery of B.R. Cohn Winery in the Sonoma Valley. The Pinot from Valerie's Vineyard is a truly interesting wine from what appears to be a great little micro-site in the western Carneros.

Valerie's Vineyard

Pinot Noir Carneros One Acre 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy, complex dusty cherry aromas; full and rich dusty cherry flavors, lots of earthy and savory spice notes; toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex and earthy, this is a really interesting Pinot from a tiny one-acre site in the Sonoma side of Carneros.

60 cases made \$40 Score: 91

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines reviewed in this issue.

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Lynmar Winery

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Merry Edwards

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Russian Hill Estate

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Segue Cellars

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Testarossa Vineyards

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For People Passionate About Western Pinot Noir

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Wine Samples

PinotReport accepts wine samples for use in its general "In The Market" new releases tastings as well as its special tasting reports. Please follow these guidelines for submitting wine samples for review.

1. All samples should be fully finished bottles ready for market.
2. Please submit two bottles of each wine.
3. Each wine submitted should include a data sheet with at minimum the suggested retail price, case production and distribution data.

All samples should be sent to the following address:

PinotReport

Attn: Gregory S. Walter

625 Ross Court, Sonoma, CA 95476

Tel: 707.935.0326

About Our Tastings

Generally, there are two types of tastings that appear in each issue of **PinotReport**. The first are our regular "In The Market" tastings of Pinot Noirs new on the market.

The second are our special "Tasting Reports" where we from time to time focus on a particular appellation, producer or style.

How We Taste

We taste wine in small flights with no more than 12 wines in a tasting session and one tasting session in a day. While all scores are finalized before the wines are revealed, wines are usually kept open for a day or more to see how the wines develop. Additional commentary may be added based on this, but scores are not changed.

All tasting unless otherwise noted is done blind by the Editor. Other tasters may participate, but their scores and comments are not part of the official tasting record. The tasting coordinator (who does not taste) arranges and bags all wines, which are then scored and comments recorded before bags are removed. Duplicate wines are inserted in tastings to measure consistency.

Our tastings are done under controlled, consistent conditions. We do not under any circumstances use tasting notes from large tasting events or other sub-optimal tasting venues in our published, scored tasting reports.

Wine Prices and Sourcing

Wine prices vary all around the country and can often vary significantly within the same city. We make every effort to only publish a winery's suggested retail price. This price in some cases will be higher than those you can find in your local markets. The wines we taste either come from the wineries in the form of tasting samples (always finished bottles ready for market) or wines we purchase at retail or at the winery.

Our Wine Ratings

The wines we taste are rated using a 100-point rating system. We fully understand the ongoing debate over the use of the 100-point system and while we respect the right of those who simply despise the system to continue to do so, we believe that the scale has value when used with the accompanying tasting notes as a **relative guide** to wine quality that has the added benefit of **being familiar** and **truly intuitive** for most consumers.

PinotReport's 100-Point Scale

96-100	SUPERIOR; it doesn't get better.
90-95	OUTSTANDING; approaching the best
86-89	ABOVE AVERAGE; a very good Pinot.
80-85	AVERAGE; OK if it's all you have.
60-79	BELOW AVERAGE; not recommended.
50-59	UNDRINKABLE.

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