

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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Newsletter Writing On Food,
Beverage, Restaurants
and Nutrition

Ready For Some Holidays?

IF YOU ARE READING THIS THAN YOU HAVE AT LEAST SURVIVED THE FIRST ROUND OF THE HOLIDAYS THIS YEAR: THANKSGIVING. If it seems that somehow the holidays have snuck up on you this year in particular, then you and I would be on the same panicky page.

The best way to push down that panic attack (aside from opening a bottle of Pinot) is to take a deep breath and plan out which bottles of Pinot you want to open for the rest of the holiday onslaught that has yet to occur. The events can be many and varied, from office parties to New Years Eve parties; casual gatherings to formal holiday parties; romantic dinners out to big family dinners at home.

My cardinal rule in holiday wine pairings is to not sweat the pairings. Generally speaking, I don't control the holiday menus, so I just make sure I have a.) plenty of bottles of bubbly and Pinot available because either or both work in just about any situation and b.) make sure that anything I break out is a wine that I want to drink—to excess if necessary.

On the next page I have pulled together some of my favorite Pinots that I have tasted this year. Some are truly special and hard to find, others great values that would be worth searching out. **These selections are sort of an advance peak at the wines I will be including in my Pinot Passion Awards in the next issue.** You will also find many nice choices among the wines I've reviewed in the rest of this issue

In This Issue...

This issue features new releases from producers including Ampelos Cellars, Arista Winery, Black Kite, Brophy Clark, La Rochelle, Longoria, MacPhail, O'Connor Vineyard, Papapietro Perry, Reata, Roar Wines, Russian Hill and Schug Carneros Estate.

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

Please also accept my sincere wishes for a safe and happy holiday season!

-- Greg Walter, editor and publisher

My Holiday Pinot Picks...

Awesome Pinots Regardless of Price

These wines will likely be hard to find—nonetheless they are some of the best Pinots I have tasted all year would be great on any holiday table. Listed alphabetically:

Benovia Winery

Pinot Noir Sonoma County Cohn Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, black cherry aromas with spice and rose petal notes; rich, black cherry and boysenberry flavors with layers of spice and floral notes; lush texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Lots of nuance and complexity from this Pinot. The Cohn Vineyard was planted in 1970 and shows that unusual vine maturity in this wine.

276 cases made \$62 Score: 94

Clos Pepe Estate

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex plum and black cherry aromas with pepper and anise notes; deep, complex, lush plum and cherry flavors with spice and pepper notes; silky, lush texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Lush, silky and powerful Pinot with great depth and richness. Fills your mouth with so much flavor! Drinks well now but will definitely reward some patience in your cellar.

915 cases made \$59 Score: 95

Cobb Wines

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Rice-Spivak Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; bright, complex cherry, herbal and forest floor aromas; deep, concentrated cherry flavors with complex spice and forest floor notes; silky texture; sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Elegant Pinot with a bright, intense core of fruit surrounded by amazing nuance. Wow.

330 cases made \$70 Score: 96

The Donum Estate

Pinot Noir Carneros Estate West Slope 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, incredibly layered aromas of black cherry, clove and cinnamon; rich, deep, black cherry flavors with very complex clove and spice notes, very silky texture; sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Simply incredible Pinot. Deep and rich with layers and layers of complex notes; needs to breathe at least an hour. This Pinot will reward your patience in the cellar.

250 cases made \$85 Score: 97

Loring Wine Company

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Durell Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; rich stewed cherry aromas with deep

earthy and spicy notes; complex cherry and earthy flavors with layers of spice and cola; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Silky, deep Pinot with really great flavors. This really is a treat by itself but will also play well with any grilled meats.

150 cases made \$48 Score: 95

Siduri Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2010

Deep ruby color; complex, rich black cherry aromas with smoky notes; deep, complex, black cherry and earthy flavors with smoky bacon and sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Tight and closed at first, this rich, delicious Pinot opens up into one of the better examples from this vineyard I've had this year.

241 cases made \$52 Score: 96

Great Values... and Great Pinot

Make no mistake, these are terrific Pinots on their own. The bonus here is that they are also terrific values and somewhat available in major markets. Listed alphabetically:

Acrobat

Pinot Noir Oregon 2010

Medium ruby color; spicy raspberry aromas; rich, bright cherry and raspberry flavors with silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and lighter-bodied Pinot perfect for sipping or light foods.

31,000 cases made \$20 Score: 90

The Forager

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep herbal and earthy aromas with some berry notes; deep berry flavors with earthy notes; some oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and earthy Pinot with a lot to offer a hearty mushroom pasta.

900 cases made \$25 Score: 91

R2 Wine Company

Pinot Noir California Black Pine 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep ripe cherry and earthy aromas; rich, deep red cherry and plum flavors with earthy notes; silky texture, nice oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe Pinot that's a nearly perfect blend of full fruit and earthy complexity.

1,033 cases made \$26 Score: 93

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.

Ampelos Cellars

Ampelos Cellars is the passion and dream of Peter and Rebecca Work, two former corporate Americans who in 1999 purchased land in the then nearly unheard of, cool and windy Santa Rita Hills with an idea that they would eventually plant a vineyard and make wine. In 2001, after the 9/11 attacks, they decided it was time to get out of the corporate world. They planted their first vines in 2001 with a 15-acres planting of Pinot Noir (10 acres, Pommard and Dijon 115), Syrah and a tiny amount of Viognier. Subsequent plantings in 2004 added another 10 acres of Pinot Noir, Syrah and Grenache. Their first Pinot Noirs, produced in 2002 and 2003, were made using grapes from Fiddlestix Vineyard. 2004 was the first harvest from their estate vineyard. Today Ampelos focuses on Pinot Noir, Syrah, Grenache, Viognier and Dornfelder. Peter and Rebecca's son, Don Schroeder, is their winemaking consultant, in addition to being the winemaker at Sea Smoke Cellars.

Ampelos Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rho 2007

Medium ruby color; deep, berry, black pepper and herbal aromas; complex berry and cherry flavors with herbal and anise notes; bright flavors; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, complex Pinot with a decided herbal edge.

460 cases made \$45 Score: 90

Ampelos Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Lambda 2008

Medium ruby color; forward herbal, black pepper and stewed

cherry aromas; complex, rich stewed cherry flavors with spice, pepper and toasty oak notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spice and complex stewed cherry flavors make this a really interesting Pinot. Drinks well now, but has structure to continue to improve.

960 cases made \$35 Score: 91

Arista Winery

Arista Winery was founded in 2002 by the McWilliams family on 36 acres of benchland above Westside Road in the northern end of the Russian River Valley. Mark McWilliams, son of Al and Janice McWilliams, runs the day-to-day operations and production at the winery. His brother Ben works on the vineyard management side. Pinot bottlings are from various sites in Russian River and Sonoma Coast including the Toboni Vineyard, Mononi Vineyard and the Bacicalupi Vineyard in Russian River Valley, the Perli Vineyard in Mendocino Ridge and the La Cruz Vineyard in the Petaluma Gap area of the Sonoma Coast AVA. Regional Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast bottlings are also produced. The family has developed estate vineyards on their Westside Road site and have already created an impressive tasting room/visitors center with beautiful gardens. Leslie Sisneros is the winemaker. This winery continues to get better and better and is already a serious Pinot player on Westside Road. The '09 bottlings here are a serious step forward.

Arista Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010

Medium ruby color; ripe cherry aromas with spicy notes; rich, ripe bright red cherry flavors with spice and cola notes; some toasty oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe, rich Pinot that is drinking well now—pair with grilled pork tenderloin.

289 cases made \$45 Score: 90

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Incredibly tasty..."

Roar Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2010

Deep ruby color; deep, complex plum aromas with earthy, savory notes; complex, rich black cherry and plum flavors with savory spice, sweet oak and black pepper notes; lush, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Incredibly complex and interesting Pinot. Has nice structure for age but I have to say that if I had any, I'd be too tempted to drink it all now.

614 cases made \$52 Score: 95

SMART BUY!

"Earthy and rich..."

Schug Carneros Estate

Pinot Noir Carneros 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy aromas with spicy cherry notes; deep, rich dark cherry flavors with spice and herbal notes, just the right touch of sweet oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, rich Pinot with great texture and mouthfeel; drinks well now but will improve in your cellar for a few years.

7,050 cases made \$28 Score: 93

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Arista Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Longbow 2010

Medium ruby color; bright, spicy red cherry and cola aromas; rich, ripe, bright cherry flavors with cinnamon and spice notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy cherry flavors and a silky mouthfeel make this a Pinot that is drinking well now.

290 cases made \$48 Score: 90

Arista Winery

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010

Medium ruby color; deep cherry and earthy aromas; ripe, rich cherry and earthy flavors with spicy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, earthy Pinot that's ready to drink.

850 cases made \$35 Score: 91

Black Kite Cellars

Black Kite Cellars is truly a family venture—three generations of the Green family are involved in the winery's day to day operations. Donald and Maureen Green moved to Sonoma County in 1987. Donald had founded three telecommunications companies in the North Bay and was an avid ornithologist; Maureen a dedicated animal lover. They wanted to be a part of the agricultural lifestyle of the area. They purchased the 40-acre parcel in the Anderson Valley that would become the Black Kite Vineyard in 1995. The land is in the "Deep End" area of the valley along the Navarro River near the town of Philo and had a long-exhausted Gewurztraminer vineyard in the lower blocks down by the river. In 1999, The Greens replanted the vineyard to Pinot Noir and added two additional blocks up the hill from the river. Three blocks are Redwoods' Edge at the top of the property, Stony Terrace in the middle and River Bend along the river. Donald and Maureen's two daughters, Rebecca Green Birdsall and Victoria Green Comfort, and grandson Michael Green are also involved in Black Kite. Rebecca oversees all winery operations including working with winemaker Jeff Gaffner (his family's label is Saxon Brown). Pinot bottlings include blends of selected blocks called Kite's Rest and Angel Hawk and three block specific bottlings—Redwoods' Edge, Stony Terrace and River Turn. The style is deep and complex with a great core of fruit. The name—Black Kite Cellars—comes from a rare raptor that lives in the Anderson Valley—the Black Shouldered Kite. This falcon-shaped raptor is mostly white with distinctive black shoulders. The Greens got creative, shortened the name and changed the bird on the label to all black and a brand was born.

Black Kite Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Angel Hawk 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, herbal cherry aromas

with some berry and spice notes; deep, lush dark cherry flavors with some herb and earthy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, deep Pinot with a strong backbone and moderate oak and tannin. Best with a substantial dish.

109 cases made \$75 Score: 91

Brophy Clark Cellars

Brophy Clark Cellars is a small-lot Pinot producer and the long-time dream of John Clark and Kelley Brophy Clark. Both industry veterans, John is a senior winemaking executive with The Wine Group and Kelley has her own viticultural consulting business, Coastal Vineyard Consulting. Together they formed Brophy Clark in 1996 and predictably John handles the winemaking and Kelley much of the vineyard sourcing. Brophy Clark also produces Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Zinfandel. Pinot bottlings include regional bottlings from Santa Barbara County, Santa Maria Valley and Santa Rita Hills.

Brophy Clark Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County 2009

Medium ruby color, earthy cherry aromas with vanilla notes; rich, earthy cherry flavors with spice notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, medium weight Pinot with a silky mouthfeel.

1,000 cases made \$15 Score: 86

Brophy Clark Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley 2009

Medium ruby color, rich, ripe cherry aromas with earthy, cola notes; rich, earthy cherry and berry flavors with some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Toasty, earthy flavors make this Pinot a match for grilled meats.

300 cases made \$25 Score: 88

Brophy Clark Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley 2010

Medium ruby color; rich cherry aromas with earth and spice notes; rich, deep, plum and cherry flavors with a lot of earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spice and earthy notes make this an interesting Pinot for the table.

1,288 cases made \$28 Score: 88

Brophy Clark Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; forward, full plum aromas with pepper and spice notes; full, forward cherry and plum flavors with pepper notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, forward Pinot with structure. Needs some time in the glass to open.

592 cases made \$34 Score: 89

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

La Rochelle

Steven Kent Mirassou is part of a family that has had more than 100 years of pioneering history in California wine with the founding and development of Mirassou Vineyards. Steven's wine ventures are under his three-brand Steven Kent Portfolio that also includes "Lineage" (a wine made from the five classic Bordeaux varieties), Steven Kent (mainly focused on estate Livermore Valley Cabernet Sauvignon but other wines are produced) and La Rochelle, Steven's label focused on high-end Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The name "La Rochelle" comes from the French port from which Steven's great-great-grandfather departed more than a century and a half ago for the New World. Steven and Winemaker Tom Stutz source fruit from superstar vineyards up and down the West Coast to create several vineyard designate Pinot bottlings as well as appellation blends. Some classically proportioned Chardonnay bottlings, a Pinot Meunier and a delicious Rose of Pinot Noir are also produced. The La Rochelle Pinots are texture driven, not shy in flavor and impeccably balanced.

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Conzelman Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; subtle, complex dusty cherry and herbal aromas; rich, ripe cherry flavors with herbal, earthy notes, some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, subtle Pinot that would be great with a mushroom pasta dish.

115 cases made \$48 Score: 90

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Carneros Donum Estate Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; deep, bit closed aromas of dark cherry, clove and spice; deep, rich, stewed black cherry flavors with earthy and spicy notes; some oak and tannin; good structure

and balance; long finish. Deep and tightly wound, this is a young Pinot with a lot of potential ahead. Needs time to open up in the glass and will reward your cellar patience.

115 cases made \$75 Score: 93

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2009

Medium ruby color; rich, stewed cherry aromas with clove and earthy notes; deep, rich, stewed cherry flavors with soft, spicy notes; round in the mouth with some oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Round and supple Pinot with some complex earthy flavors.

55 cases made \$42 Score: 90

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Block A 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry aromas with black pepper and smoky notes; deep, complex black cherry flavors with pepper and clove notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, complex Pinot that needs time. Give it some air and serve it with a grilled steak.

328 cases made \$48 Score: 93

La Rochelle

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Tondre Grapefield 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; tight, closed at first, spicy black cherry aromas underneath; deep, intense, black cherry and plum flavors with earthy, black pepper notes; moderate oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, balanced Pinot. No question, this is a big wine in terms of flavor, oak and some tannin, but it is balanced. Needs a bunch of air and time in the bottle.

115 cases made \$48 Score: 93

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Bright and spicy..."

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Nunes Family Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, bright black cherry and berry aromas; complex and spicy flavors that are loaded with berry and cherry; silky texture; sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and spicy Pinot with flavors that just jump out of the glass.

570 cases made \$54 Score: 94

SMART BUY!

"Subtle and rich..."

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, stewed cherry aromas with some cola and earthy notes; rich, ripe, earthy, stewed cherry flavors with spice and cola notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Subtle, rich Pinot with nice flavors and a medium-bodied frame.

1,853 cases made \$33 Score: 91

Longoria Wines

Longoria Wines specializes in small-lot bottlings of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and a range of Bordeaux, Rhone, Italian and Spanish varietal bottlings. Longoria is the wine venture of Rick and Diana Longoria. Winemaker Rick Longoria has more than three decades of experience making wine in Santa Barbara County. He started the Longoria label in 1982 and continued to make small amounts of wine between that first vintage and when he and Diana decided to make Longoria their full-time occupation in 1997. The Longoria tasting room is located in Los Olivos; the winery is in the Lompoc "Wine Ghetto," a small industrial park where many Santa Rita Hills producers have their winery facilities. Rick's Pinot bottlings include a "Lovely Rita" Santa Rita Hills blend, a bottling from his Fe Ciega Vineyard ("blind faith" in Spanish), and bottlings from the Bien Nacido Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley and Rancho Santa Rosa in Santa Rita Hills. All are full, rich and complex Pinots with a great core of fruit and great balance.

Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard 2010

Medium ruby color; deep, complex, spicy cherry aromas with herbal notes; deep, complex, layered cherry flavors with earthy, savory spice notes; some oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, earthy Pinot with a lot to like now and a lot to look forward to.

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|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 160 cases made | \$45 | Score: 93 |
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Longoria Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, deep black cherry and plum aromas with black pepper and earthy notes; deep, complex, thick black cherry and plum flavors with rich, silky mouthfeel; toasty oak and earthy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Beautifully mouthfilling and rich Pinot with layers and layers of flavor. Drinks well now but will age well too.

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|----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 97 cases made | \$45 | Score: 94 |
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MacPhail Family Wines

James MacPhail believes in family, believes in setting goals and pursuing them with passion; and he believes in making great Pinot Noir. Growing up in Marin County with family roots in local businesses, James retained a love of the land. An accomplished musician and athlete, he went to school in business and hospitality and was headed for a career in hotel management. What gave him pause was the fact that such a career choice would take him away from his home and family. Instead his decision drove him down a path to pursue something he was truly passionate about: wine. He began

working wineries in Sonoma County and developed an interest in Pinot Noir, especially those grown in cooler regions. In 2002 he founded MacPhail Family Wines to focus on making Pinot Noir from those cooler regions. He searched out and found some terrific vineyards in Anderson Valley and Sonoma Coast and released his first Pinots from the 2002 vintage. In time for 2008 vintage, James completed construction on his own small winery—a 4,400 square foot building literally in his backyard in Healdsburg. Currently, James produces regional blends from Anderson Valley and the Sonoma Coast; and several excellent vineyard designated Pinots. The new winery and his new partner, The Hess Collection, have given him the platform to pursue his passion for Pinot in an even stronger way. His Pinots are terrific and they should be part of your cellar.

MacPhail Family Wines

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Toulouse Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, dusty cherry aromas with toasty notes; rich, dusty cherry flavors with earthy, forest floor notes; toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, toasty Pinot with a lot of earthy complexity.

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| 350 cases made | \$49 | Score: 91 |
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MacPhail Family Wines

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Wightman House Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex stewed cherry and forest floor aromas; rich, bright cherry fruit flavors with earthy notes; some sweet oak; very silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, delicious Pinot just developing complexity. Needs time in the glass and the bottle.

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| 132 cases made | \$55 | Score: 92 |
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MacPhail Family Wines

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley The Flyer 2010

Medium ruby color; deep, complex aromas that are a bit tight, dark cherry and spice are there now; rich, ripe, lush cherry flavors with spicy, cherry cola notes; lush and mouthfilling texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot is all about texture and mouthfeel. Very lush with delicious flavor.

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 180 cases made | \$59 | Score: 94 |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|

O'Connor Vineyard

Jim and Mary O'Connor have been winegrowers in the southwestern end of the Russian River Valley since 1996. Their three-acre vineyard planted to Pommard and Dijon 115 clones has for years been part of the Russian River Valley bottling at nearby Freeman Vineyard and Winery. In 2005, Jim and Mary decided to start their own label to showcase their vineyard and

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

with Ed Kurtzman's help, the O'Connor Vineyard label was born. The O'Connor Pinots reflect the site well and have great texture.

O'Connor Vineyard

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010

Medium ruby color; nice aromas of cherry and berry with earthy notes; rich, earthy cherry flavors with some spice and herbal notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and earthy Pinot that's well balanced and drinking nicely now.

285 cases made \$35 Score: 92

Papapietro Perry Winery

Papapietro-Perry Winery is a wine venture between four friends—Ben and Yolanda Papapietro and Bruce and Renae Perry. For Ben Papapietro, wine was always there—on the dinner table, at all family gatherings and in his grandparents' cellar. In 1980, Ben started his own garage winery at his San Francisco home. He began helping in the fledgling winery of a fellow newspaper employee—Burt Williams, co-founder of Williams & Selyem. It wasn't long before Ben produced his first solo Pinot Noir, securing enough grapes to produce five gallons of wine. A few years later friend Bruce Perry joined Ben in his winemaking ventures. By 1990, Ben and Bruce found consistent vineyard sources for their homemade Pinot Noir and spent the next eight years perfecting their craft. Armed with encouragement from friends, Ben and Bruce went commercial with their wine in 1998, producing 75 cases of Pinot Noir. As they became more established, they built relationships with great vineyards in the Russian River and Sonoma Coast regions and continued to make terrific Pinot. Bruce's wife Renae Perry soon took on the sales and marketing for the growing brand. Ben's Pinots are definitely vineyard-driven and thus the styles vary with each vineyard and vintage, but there's always a core of deep fruit and earthy complexity, silky texture, great structure and balance. Pinot bottlings include appellation blends for Russian River and Sonoma Coast, vineyard designates from the Charles Vineyard, Peters Vineyard, Leras Family Vineyard, Nunes Vineyard, Ellsbree Vineyard, as well as Pommard Clones and 777 Clones bottlings that are clonal selections from selected vineyards.

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Charles Vineyard 2010

Medium ruby color; deep dusty cherry aromas with herbal, mineral notes; ripe, complex, dusty cherry flavors with herbal, earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot has a subtle complexity that gets more and more interesting as it opens up. Would pair well with grilled or roasted pork.

690 cases made \$54 Score: 92

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, forward, spicy cherry aromas; rich, red cherry flavors with bright spicy and earthy notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, interesting Pinot that is great to drink right now.

1,130 cases made \$49 Score: 91

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Ellsbree Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy, forest floor aromas with cherry notes; complex, earthy cherry flavors with forest floor and mushroom notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy and complex, this Pinot needs time to open up.

520 cases made \$54 Score: 92

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Leras Family Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy cherry aromas with some savory, herbal notes; complex, rich cherry flavors with earthy notes; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. A full Pinot with really nice savory, herbal notes. Needs time in the glass to open up.

980 cases made \$54 Score: 93

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Mukaida Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry aromas with subtle, spice notes; complex cherry and spice flavors with earthy, cinnamon notes; silky, lush texture; great structure and balance; long finish. Subtle, complex Pinot with an amazing silky texture. Delicious.

80 cases made \$75 Score: 95

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Nunes Family Vineyard 2010

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 5.

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Peters Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; forward cherry and berry aromas with some herbal notes; deep, full cherry and berry flavors with nice layers of herbal and spice notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Forward Pinot full of nice fruit and complex herbal and spice notes; has nice structure for aging.

400 cases made \$54 Score: 92

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 777 Clones 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, interesting cherry aromas with earthy notes; deep, complex berry and cherry flavors with subtle, earthy notes; some oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Subtle, earthy Pinot that needs time in the glass to open; very interesting when it does so.

520 cases made \$70 Score: 93

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Pommard Clones 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, cherry and berry aromas with complex earthy, forest floor notes; deep, complex berry and cherry flavors with some earthy and mushroom notes; silky texture; some tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot that has great layers of flavor now; opens up great in the glass and will reward some cellar patience.

350 cases made \$70 Score: 94

Papapietro Perry Winery

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Campbell Ranch 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, dusty, dried cherry aromas with spice notes; deep, complex, cherry flavors with dried herbs and earthy notes; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Very complex and nuanced Pinot with layers that keep emerging with time in the glass. Needs time and it's worth the wait.

470 cases made \$54 Score: 94

Reata Winery

The Reata Winery is located at the southern end of the Napa Valley situated in rolling hills that contain both vineyards and grazing land for cattle and sheep. Originally built as the Kirkland Ranch winery, Reata emerged under new ownership and management a couple of years ago. The name, Reata, is Spanish for "lariat" and is a tribute to the property's long history as ranchland. Winemaker Nori Nakamura crafts Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the best regions in Napa and Sonoma counties.

Reata Winery

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry aromas with spice and cola notes; ripe, rich, dark cherry flavors with spice and earthy notes; some oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, deep Pinot with spicy flavors.

6,200 cases made \$30 Score: 90

Roar Wines

Gary and Rosella Francioni, third generation farmers in the Santa Lucia Highlands, are proprietors of Roar Wines,

proprietors of Rosella's Vineyard and partners with Gary Pisoni in Garys' Vineyard. With the Roar Pinots, they set out to capture the pure character of the Santa Lucia Highlands vineyards that they know so well. The name Roar refers to the sound that the coastal winds make as they blow through the gaps and down the benchland that makes up the region. Roar Pinot bottlings include a regional Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot and vineyard designates from Rosella's Vineyard, Garys' Vineyard and the Pisoni Vineyard. Gary also has a new vineyard that is beginning to show its stuff, the Sierra Mar Vineyard. It's hard to find a Pinot winemaker in Santa Lucia Highlands who Gary hasn't helped out in one way or another. Ed Kurtzman is the Pinot Master behind the Roar wines. The Francionis are perfect proof that artisan wines are a true reflection of the people behind them.

Roar Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, black cherry aromas with earthy notes; deep, complex cherry and plum flavors with smoky notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, silky Pinot that is drinking nicely now.

1,218 cases made \$40 Score: 93

Roar Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2010

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 3.

Roar Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Pisoni Vineyard 2010

Deep ruby color; dense, deep black cherry aromas with complex herbal notes; deep, black cherry flavors with some tannin and toasty oak; herbal and anise notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Dense, deep and complex Pinot. Needs a good hour or more to open up in the glass.

252 cases made \$58 Score: 92

Roar Wines

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2010

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, herbal, earthy aromas with black cherry notes; complex, layered black cherry and berry flavors with subtle smoky and earthy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Layered, subtle Pinot that makes a beautiful match for a beef braise.

524 cases made \$50 Score: 94

Russian Hill Estate

Ed Gomez and Ellen Mack began their journey in wine making Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay under their Benicia Cellars label in the Solano County city of Benicia.

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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 next door to Sonoma-Cutrer. 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, Tara 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 Chardonnay, Viognier, a Rose, Syrah and five bottlings of Pinot Noir: a Russian River Valley blend, an Estate bottling and vineyard designates from the Leras Vineyard and their own Tara Vineyard and Sunnyview Vineyard. Underpriced and truly under-recognized, Russian Hill should be part of your Pinot cellar.

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2009

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 5.

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Estate 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy aromas with some spice and red cherry notes; rich, deep, lush stewed red cherry flavors with earthy, herbal notes; silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, rich Pinot with really nice layers of flavor. I would love to have this with my favorite Penne con Funghi.

1,262 cases made \$40 Score: 93

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Leras Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; complex, herbal and earthy aromas; rich, lush, red cherry flavors with spicy, vanilla notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, rich Pinot with great texture. Showing lots of great fruit now, nice structure for aging.

205 cases made \$50 Score: 92

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Sunnyview Vineyard 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy, herbal aromas with some rhubarb notes; deep, forward cherry fruit with herbal,

earthy and rhubarb notes; mouthfilling texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Full and mouthfilling without being heavy, this Pinot has a really interesting set of herbal and earthy flavors.

69 cases made \$60 Score: 93

Russian Hill Estate

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Tara Vineyard 2009

Medium ruby color; deep, a little tight, nice stewed cherry and earthy aromas; deep, lush, complex cherry flavors with spice and earthy notes; very silky texture; rich, sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Beautifully balanced and lush Pinot that is truly a pleasure to drink now—has the structure to age gracefully.

345 cases made \$54 Score: 95

Schug Carneros Estate

Schug Carneros Estate was founded in 1980 by veteran winemaker Walter Schug and his family. Walter Schug has decades of winemaking experience but is best known for his tenure at Joseph Phelps Vineyards. The Schug Carneros Estate Winery is located on a hilltop in the far western reaches of the Carneros appellation southwest of the city of Sonoma on 50 acres and surrounded by estate vineyards. The winery focuses on Chardonnay and Pinot noir and other varieties from its estate vineyards as well as other local growers. Mike Cox is the winemaker. The Pinot style is fresh and lively with good structure and balance. The winery is really worth a visit.

Schug Carneros Estate

Pinot Noir Carneros 2010

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 3.

Schug Carneros Estate

Pinot Noir Carneros Heritage Reserve 2009

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex aromas of vanilla, clove and dark cherry; complex, full black cherry flavors with a rich palette of vanilla, clove and herbal notes; toasty oak and moderate tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex and deep, this Pinot is a youngster right now. Needs air to open up in the glass and will reward your patience in the cellar. This bottling is a selection of the best barrel lots from the winery's Carneros vineyard sources.

812 cases made \$40 Score: 92

Schug Carneros Estate

Pinot Noir Carneros Schug Estate 2010

Medium ruby color; rich, bright cherry aromas with spice notes; ripe, bright red cherry flavors with spice and earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish.

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Bright, vibrant Pinot with a lot of juicy flavors. Great with a wide range of foods.

239 cases made \$40 Score: 93

Schug Carneros Estate ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010***

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, bright cherry and strawberry aromas with spicy notes; rich, vibrant red cherry flavors with some cinnamon and vanilla and sweet oak notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and spicy, this is a great Pinot on its own or with grilled fish or even a roasted chicken.

9,203 cases made \$24 Score: 92

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines discussed in this issue.

Ampelos Cellars
805.736.9957, www.ampeloscellars.com

Arista Winery
707.473.0606, www.aristawinery.com

Black Kite Cellars
415.923.0277, www.blackkitecellars.com

Brophy Clark Cellars
805.929.4830, www.brophyclarkcellars.com

La Rochelle
925.243.6442, www.lrwine.com

Longoria Wines
805.688.0305, www.longoriawine.com

MacPhail Family Wines
707.433.4780, www.macphailwines.com

O'Connor Vineyard
www.oconnorvineyards.com

Papapietro Perry Winery
707.433.0422, www.papapietro-perry.com

Reata Winery
707.254.8673, www.reatawines.com

Roar Wines
831.675.1681, www.roarwines.com

Russian Hill Estate
707.575.9428, www.russianhillwinery.com

Schug Carneros Estate
707.939.9363, www.schugwinery.com

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Editorial Philosophy

PinotReport is an independent newsletter owned, written and published by Greg Walter. All tastings unless otherwise noted are done blind by the Editor. Any and all opinions and analysis expressed in these pages unless otherwise noted belong to Greg Walter, who has no financial involvement or connection whatsoever in the production, distribution or sales of wine.

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 one bottle 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: Greg Walter

625 Ross Court, Sonoma, CA 95476

Tel: 707.696.7553

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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