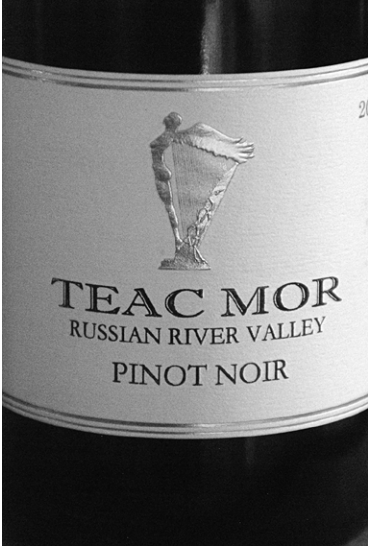


# The Wine Corner

## The world of Pinot Noir – Best in the U.S.

By Pierre DuMont

Those who pay even moderate attention to the world of wine probably know the hottest, most coveted grape variety of the moment is pinot noir. The price per ton for this varietal is through the



Newcomer Teac Mor is a winery to keep your eye on.

roof. For most of its history in California pinot noir took a back seat to cabernet sauvignon, merlot and zinfandel. Some say its ascendancy began with the movie *Sideways* in which a pinot-crazed wine lover goes on a road trip looking for the perfect pinot, all while making derogatory comments about merlot.

Whatever the reason, Americans are catching on to what the French have known for many years – pinot noir is the most interesting of all red grape varieties. No other grape has the ability to express variations in soil and climate – what is termed terroir – as well as pinot noir.

The premier place to taste pinot noir is the Pinot Days tasting held in June in San Francisco. This is when North America's finest pinot producers gather to show their stuff to thousands of rabid pinophiles. I was amazed at the sheer number of wineries that are dedicated to producing primarily great pinot noir – that is what they live for.

I went to the event hoping to find 10 great pinots to write about. Instead I found many more. The following wines are the best of the entire Pinot Days tasting, which included literally hundreds of wines. These represent the pinnacle of pinot production in the U.S.

### 2011 McPhail pinot Noir Gap's Crown

This outstanding producer makes multiple brilliant pinots from Anderson Valley and the Sonoma Coast. This famous vineyard, near the cool Petaluma Gap, has produced a classic Sonoma coast pinot with loads of cherry fruit and floral notes on the nose and mouth-filling flavors of raspberries and currants. While it drinks beautifully now, this wine has the stuffing to age for a decade. [www.mcphail-wines.com](http://www.mcphail-wines.com)

### 2012 Sojourn Pinot Noir Ridgetop Vineyard

This vineyard is located on the top of the Sonoma coast

range near Annapolis. The wine displays tremendous aromas of earthy, jammy cherries and spice box. Reminiscent of a classic Burgundy, it possesses good acidity for definition as well as a medium-bodied finish with good extract and richness. [www.sojourncellars.com](http://www.sojourncellars.com)

### 2012 Morgan Pinot Noir Gary's Vineyard

This famous vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA is used by several producers. Morgan's version of Gary's Vineyard offers complex aromas of earth, plums, and currants with a touch of meaty characteristics. It is expansive and rich and is perfectly ready to drink today. [www.morganwinery.com](http://www.morganwinery.com)

### 2009 Del Dotto Pinot Noir Cinghiale Vineyard

Napa's Del Dotto winery is mainly known as a producer of high quality cabernet sauvignon but this bottle shows they have other tricks up their sleeve. Italian for wild boar, the Cinghiale Vineyard is located in the Sonoma coast region. A dark ruby color is followed by aromas of plums, earth, cherries and figs. Medium bodied, with well-integrated acidity, hints of oak and a tight style with good depth as well as ripeness. [www.deldottovineyards.com](http://www.deldottovineyards.com)

### 2012 Buena Vista Pinot Noir Private Reserve

Only 500 cases were made of this, Buena Vista's top pinot noir. The wine offers sweet cherry fruit intermixed with herbs, berries, earth and spice. It is round and plump with just the right hint of vanilla-tinged oak. Should drink well for a decade. [www.buenavistawinery.com](http://www.buenavistawinery.com)

### 2010 Ellero Pinot Noir Pisa Terrace

Most pinot noir fans know New Zealand has come on strong as a producer of the grape. This wine has great finesse and a lightness of body more similar to Oregon than California pinots. It is redolent of cherries and wildflowers and has great acidity giving it a clean finish. Ready to drink now, it should be consumed in the next few years. [www.ellerowine.com](http://www.ellerowine.com)

### 2011 McEvoy Ranch Pinot Noir The Evening Standard

The Evening Standard boasts a smoky, earthy, plum-scented bouquet. As the wine sits in the glass a gorgeous floral note also emerges. There is excellent concentration, medium body, tart acidity and fine length. [www.mcevoyranch.com](http://www.mcevoyranch.com)

### 2010 Kobler Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast

This estate wine shows complex floral, currant, cherry and blueberry characteristics. Medium bodied, with well-integrated acidity, wood and tannin, this beautiful effort should age well for four or five years. [www.koblerestatewinery.com](http://www.koblerestatewinery.com)

### 2013 Ousterhout Rose of Pinot Noir

There were several pinot noir

rosés at the Pinot Days tasting, and this was my favorite. A beautiful, light salmon color, it has a luscious perfumed nose of strawberries and wildflowers. In the mouth there is ample peach and apricot fruit and the finish is refreshingly dry. A great summer quaffer. [www.oursterhoutwine.com](http://www.oursterhoutwine.com)

### 2012 Bucher Three Sixty Pinot Noir

Right in the Westside Road heartland of the famed Russian River pinot territory, the Bucher family runs an organic dairy and farms pinot noir. This wine has the classic richness and power of its famous neighbors Williams Selwym and Roccioli. It is beautifully perfumed with loads of berry and plum fruit and a nice touch of tobacco and earth. This powerful wine will improve with cellaring and should last up to a decade. [www.buchervineyard.net](http://www.buchervineyard.net)

### 2012 Belden Barns Pinot Noir Serendipity Block

This Sonoma county winery was new to me and this wine reveals top-notch potential. It exhibits an array of blackberry and cherry fruit, beautifully integrated toasty oak, adequate acidity for definition, and a layered, textured concentrated mid-palate as well as finish. [www.beldenbarns.com](http://www.beldenbarns.com)

### 2012 Pangloss Pinot Noir Charles Vineyard

The Anderson Valley AVA is home to some ethereal, light bodied Burgundian style pinots, and the Pangloss Charles Vineyard is one of them. It has a nose of fresh picked wildflowers and berry fruit and smooth, elegant cherry fruit on the palate with a smooth clean finish. A true food wine, this would be great with grilled salmon. [www.panglosscellars.com](http://www.panglosscellars.com)

### 2012 Kanzler Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast

This wine shows aromas of earth, plums, prunes and some oak. Medium bodied, compact, pure, nicely structured and deep, it will benefit from another year in the bottle. [www.kanzlervineyards.com](http://www.kanzlervineyards.com)

### 2012 Rusack Pinot Noir Reserve Santa Rita Hills

Santa Barbara County's Santa Rita Hills appellation has proven itself to be an excellent area for pinot noir. The Rusack boasts copious quantities of cherries and cranberries along with a touch of chocolate. Mouth filling and savory, this delicious wine will drink well for five to seven more years. [www.rusackvineyards.com](http://www.rusackvineyards.com)

### 2012 FEL Pinot Noir Savoy Vineyard

The cool climate Savoy vineyard near the town of Philo in Anderson Valley has produced a lithe, elegant Burgundian style pinot with aromas of cherries and figs followed by lots of plum and currant fruit in the mouth. The lingering elegant finish closes out this outstanding wine. [www.fel-wines.com](http://www.fel-wines.com)

### 2010 Teac Mor Pinot Noir

Another wonderful surprise find of the Pinot Days tasting, this new-to-me winery with a Gaelic name and Russian River fruit delivers big time. Dark ruby colored, the wine has beautifully complex black cherry, earth, mushroom and herb notes, spicy but subtle oak, medium to full

body, a lush palate and a forward style. Keep your eye on this winery. [www.teacmor.com](http://www.teacmor.com)

### 2011 Wait Cellars pinot noir

The Russian River Valley is the home to this lovely Wait pinot. It shows earthy, smoky, plum and cranberry aromas with good complexity and a soft, medium bodied style. A great food wine, this would be perfect with roast chicken. Only 75 cases made. [www.waitcellars.com](http://www.waitcellars.com)

### 2010 Ancient Oaks Pinot Noir Siebert Ranch

The label says the vines were planted by Henry Siebert when he was 80 – now that's faith in the future. A beguiling nose of cherries, minerals and toasty oak is followed by abundant berry fruit giving a big, rich mouth-feel. This powerful, full-bodied pinot cries out for some BBQ ribs. [www.ancientoakcellars.com](http://www.ancientoakcellars.com)

### 2012 Thralls Pinot Noir Roma's Vineyard

Thralls is an Old Norse word for a person wholly obedient to a need or passion, and I would say I can taste a passion for perfect pinot in this lovely wine. Made from a vineyard in the cool Anderson Valley, this subtle, sleek, feminine wine oozes charm. It is seamless on the palate and brisk and clean on the finish. [www.thrallswine.com](http://www.thrallswine.com)

### 2011 Willowbrook pinot noir Kaufman Sunnyslope Vineyard

This wine comes from the Sonoma Mountain AVA. It has complex aromas of earth, black fruits and flowers. Subtle in the mouth, it builds to an expansive, savory, medium-bodied wine with great purity as well as copious black fruits, subtle wood and a touch of minerality. Enjoy it over the next five years. [www.willowbrookcellars.com](http://www.willowbrookcellars.com)

### 2012 Mansfield-Dunne Pinot Noir Peterson Vineyard

This is the second year in a row that Mansfield-Dunne has made the top pinots list. This small producer handcrafts wines from the Santa Lucia Highlands region a now famous area for outstanding pinot grapes. Floral, perfumed aromas leap from the glass followed by a burst of cherry fruit laced with herbs and spices and a lashing of vanilla oak. Medium to full bodied it has a savory, lingering finish. A beautiful effort. [www.mansfield-dunne.com](http://www.mansfield-dunne.com)

### 2011 Stomping Girl Pinot Noir Lauterbach Hill

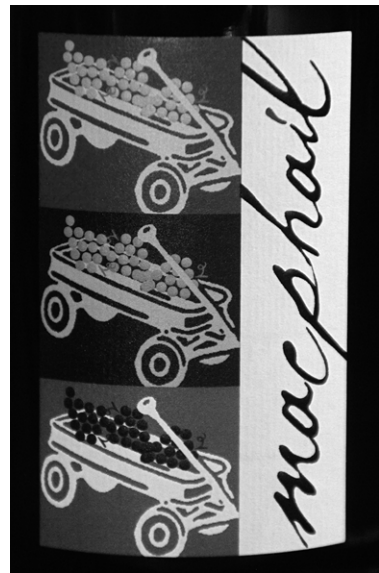
This Russian river wine has an interesting nose of black cherry, anise and incense. Structured and muscular, this serious pinot can be drunk now or cellared for six to eight years. [www.stompinggirlwines.com](http://www.stompinggirlwines.com)

### 2012 Spell Pinot Noir Terra de Promissio Vineyard

This Sonoma Coast pinot is an elegant, round, medium ruby-colored effort offering complex cherry fruit intertwined with hints of plums. Enjoy this delicious bottling over the next three to four years. [www.spellwinery.com](http://www.spellwinery.com)

### 2012 Lucienne Pinot Noir Lone Oak Vineyard

Hailing from the Santa Lucia Highlands, this wine exhibits a foresty, gamey bouquet of black fruits, spice, smoke and earth. There is plenty of glycerin, excellent purity and sweetness in the mouth, which gives way to a lingering seamless finish. A beautiful effort. [www.luciennevineyards.com](http://www.luciennevineyards.com)



McPhail is one of California's top Pinot Noir producers.

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